Tales of a Basque Grandmother

By Frances Carpenter

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TALES OF A BASQUE GRANDMOTHER

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AMATCHI SPINS WONDERFUL BASQUE TALES OUT OF THE PAST

Tales of a Basque Grandmother

By Frances Carpenter

Illustrated by Pedro Garmendia

Junior Books

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FIRST EDITION

TO

CHAPIN

with whom I discovered
the Basque Country

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

THE *folk-tales, which have been adapted in this book by the author, have been collected from numerous sources. Many are based on stories and myths recounted by M. Jules Vinson in his "Le Folk-Lore du Pays Basque," by Rev. W. Webster in his treatise on "Basque Legends," and by those found in the pages of the Basque Magazine "Gure Herria." Several have for their basic source tales written by M. Emmanuel Souberbielle.*

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I. MANESH AND MAYI AT HOME

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"DING DONG! Ding dong! Wake up, Mayi! Wake up, Manesh! Wake, all good people!"

Long before the sun begins to paint the sky red, the bell in the square church tower peals forth this message to the farmer folk of Azcar. In their cots under the sloping roof of their old house, Manesh and his sister, Mayi, hear its warning. They leap out of bed and drop down on their knees to say their morning prayer while the great bell still rings. Then they scurry into their clothes and run down the stairs into the vast whitewashed kitchen. There Ama, their mother, and Amatchi, their old grandmother, are already at work, and their father and their older brother sit drinking their bowls of steaming hot coffee.

Manesh and Mayi are two children who dwell in the village of Azcar in a little corner of France far down

near Spain. But they are not French children. "Indeed no, we are Basques," they would tell you proudly. "And our people have lived in these hills for hundreds and hundreds of years. We have cousins too over in the Spanish valleys, good Basques like ourselves. They speak our language and their homes are much the same as ours."

As they drink their milk, Manesh and Mayi can look through the open door of the kitchen into the other side of the house where the animals live. They catch glimpses of the cream-colored oxen with their long pointed horns, and they laugh when they hear the loud "ee-aw" of the patient little donkey-of-all-work. The pigs and the goats, the sheep and the chickens are all making good-morning noises, as though they too were hungry. Manesh hurries to follow his father and brother into their stable, to help give them their food, to clean out their bedding, and to get them ready for the work of the day.

Mayi stays in the kitchen aiding her mother and Amatchi to prepare the family's breakfast. She lays the plates and the cups on the long bare table at one side of the kitchen. She dusts off the *züzülü,* the bench by the fireplace where her father sits to eat his meals on these chill autumn days. She then helps break some corn bread from last week's baking into a brown earthenware pot filled with milk, and she stirs this as it cooks over the fire on the hearth. There is no stove in Mayi's kitchen. All the

food of the family is cooked over the flames in much the same way as in the early days in America. Mayi calls the porridge she is making *arto-sopa,* or corn-meal soup. The grown-up members of her family, as well as the children, make their breakfast upon it, although sometimes the men-folk have also eggs and fried ham, cooked with tomatoes and peppers.

The sun is high in the heavens as the two Basque children start off for school. Its bright rays shine down on the red-tiled roof of their home and on its white stucco walls with their gay trimmings of red timbers. Mayi stops at the little house at the side of the dooryard to see if the rabbits are eating the food she put there for their breakfast; and Manesh bends down to pat Nagarro, their dog, as they go out of the gate to the road that leads to the village.

Manesh wears on his head a round dark-blue cap called a beret. Such caps are worn by old men, young men, and boys in the Basque country, and Manesh often keeps his on even inside the house. From a distance it is hard to tell him from his sister, for they both wear long-sleeved black aprons that cover their clothes. Their feet are shod in canvas shoes with soles of twisted rope, in which they run along as lightly as though they were barefoot.

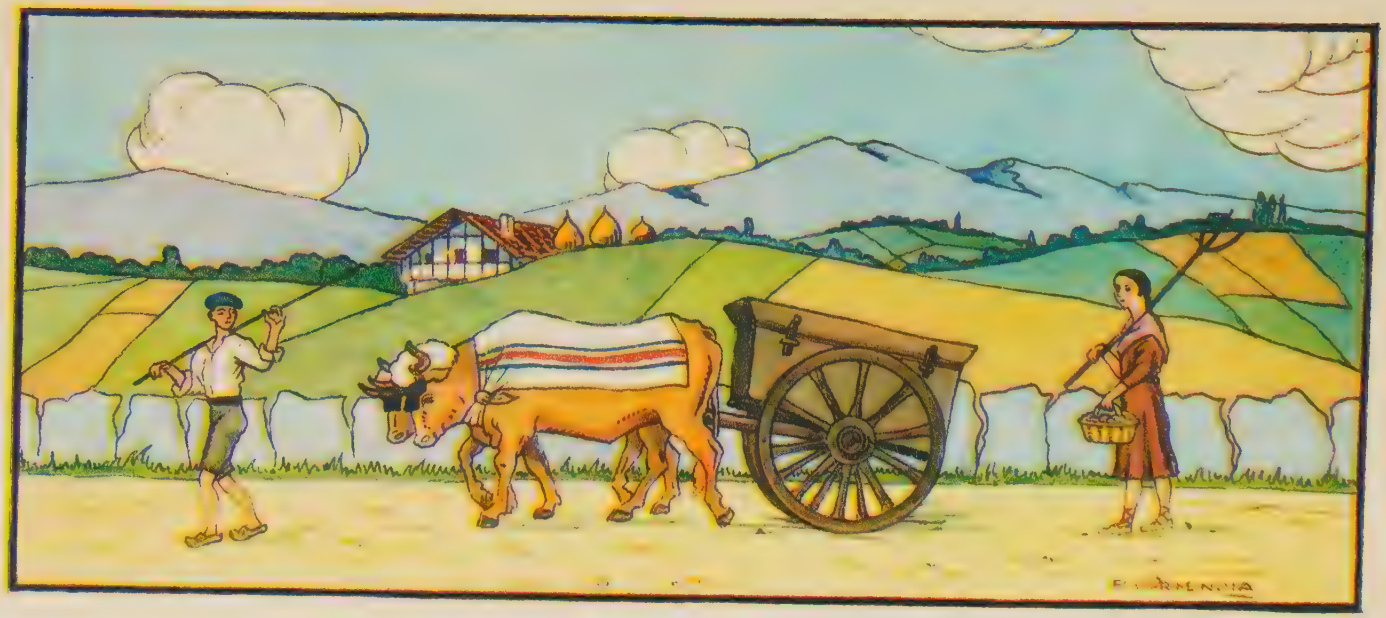
"*Bon jour, Manesh! Bon jour, Mayi!*" Their teacher calls out good-day to them from the door of the schoolhouse.

They may not speak their own Basque language in school, for the law of France says that all children in France must be taught their lessons in French. Their school has two separate parts, one for the girls and one for the boys. So Manesh and Mayi do not see each other again until the morning lessons are done. Then Mayi seeks out her brother among the other boys on the pelota court over near the village church. Pelota is a kind of handball. It is the favorite game of every Basque boy and they like it just as well as their American friends like baseball and football. Manesh is throwing his ball against the high wall of the court when his sister finds him.

"Please come, Manesh," Mayi begs. "We shall be late for our dinner and I am so hungry."

"Wait just a minute," he cries. "Watch me this time. Who says that I shall not be a champion when I am big?" And he throws his ball to the wall harder than before. It is only when he sees Mayi's black apron disappearing down the road that he leaves his friends and races after her.

The men are just coming back from the fields. They are clad in dark berets, white shirts, and black pantaloons, with long red sashes wound round their waists. Leaving their animals in the stable, they wash their hands and are soon bending hungrily over their bowls of steaming vegetable soup.



MANESH IS PROUD THAT HE CAN DRIVE THE OX TEAM

After the children left home for school Ama and Amatchi began to fill the huge soup pot. Many were the little white beans, the green leeks and potatoes, the carrots and the cabbages, the thyme and spicy herbs which they put into it, for there must be enough to serve for both dinner and supper. Mayi thinks its name, *eltzekarea,* which means "everything in the pot," is just right for this soup. She likes to stick her spoon far down into her bowl to see whether it will stand up all alone. And often it will, the soup is so thick. On Sundays their soup is specially good, for then pieces of meat are cooked in with the vegetables. The Basque farmer people have but little money. They cannot afford meat every day. It is only on Sundays and on special occasions that Manesh and Mayi eat chicken, mutton, or beef.

These Basque children never have dessert unless it should be at a wedding or feast. They have tasted ice cream only once and that was when they went with their father to market in the city of Saint-Jean-de-Luz down at the seaside. The only candies they know are the thin tablets of sweet chocolate which they buy now and then at the village store. But they are very fond of the creamy cheese their mother makes from the milk of their sheep. Often about four o'clock in the afternoon they grow hungry; then they run to ask Amatchi to give them a slice of bread spread with this cheese.

When school is done for the day Manesh goes out into the fields to help his father with the farm work. He is proud that he can drive the great ox team. He has learned to hold high the long stick with which they are guided and he is careful to touch their soft necks with it ever so gently when he wants them to turn this way or that.

Mayi works with her mother in the house and the garden. She often goes out alone or with her grandmother to tend the goats and the sheep as they graze on the hillsides. These Basque children work hard. They have but a short time for play. They see little of their busy mother. With her cleaning and cooking, her gardening and work with the men in the fields, and her trips to the near-by streams to do the family washing, she does not have much time to spend chatting with them or tending to their wants. It is Amatchi, their grandmother, with her white hair hidden under its great black kerchief, and her shawl laid over her bent old shoulders, to whom they go with their troubles and the tales of their doings. It is about her chair by the fireside that they gather on the long evenings of autumn and winter to play games and tell riddles and to hear tales of the fairies and witches and the one-eyed Tartaro ogres who live in the high mountains.

Amatchi is old, old. Manesh and Mayi do not know just how many years she has lived, but they are sure she is the very oldest person in all the village of Azcar. She can

remember back to the time when witches roamed over these hills, and the two children never tire of hearing her thrilling stories of Basa-Juan, the wild man of the mountains whose left foot makes a round hole in the ground, and whose wife, Basa-André, is quite as savage as he. Some of their favorite stories are about the fairy Laminaks and the animals who once knew how to talk.

Toward the end of each afternoon's work Manesh and Mayi listen impatiently for the sound of the evening Angelus bell. They know then that the time of day they like best is at hand. They hasten to finish their chores and at last run into the great kitchen with its cheerful fire burning so bright on the hearth.

The kitchen is the most important part of their home. It forms the living room of their family, and in it are kept many of the family treasures. There is the old grandfather clock that has been ticking away in that very same spot for two hundred years. There are the huge carved wooden chests filled with piles of fine linens. Above the hearth on the mantel shelf, with its ruffle of white cotton, stand the shining brass candlesticks with which the children used to light themselves to bed before electricity came.

Manesh likes the guns in the rack over the fireplace. He sometimes goes hunting with his father in autumn and one day not far distant a gun of his will be placed up there

with the rest. From the great wooden rafters of the ceiling there hang fat brown hams, strings of red peppers and yellow onions, and a basket of round golden cheeses.

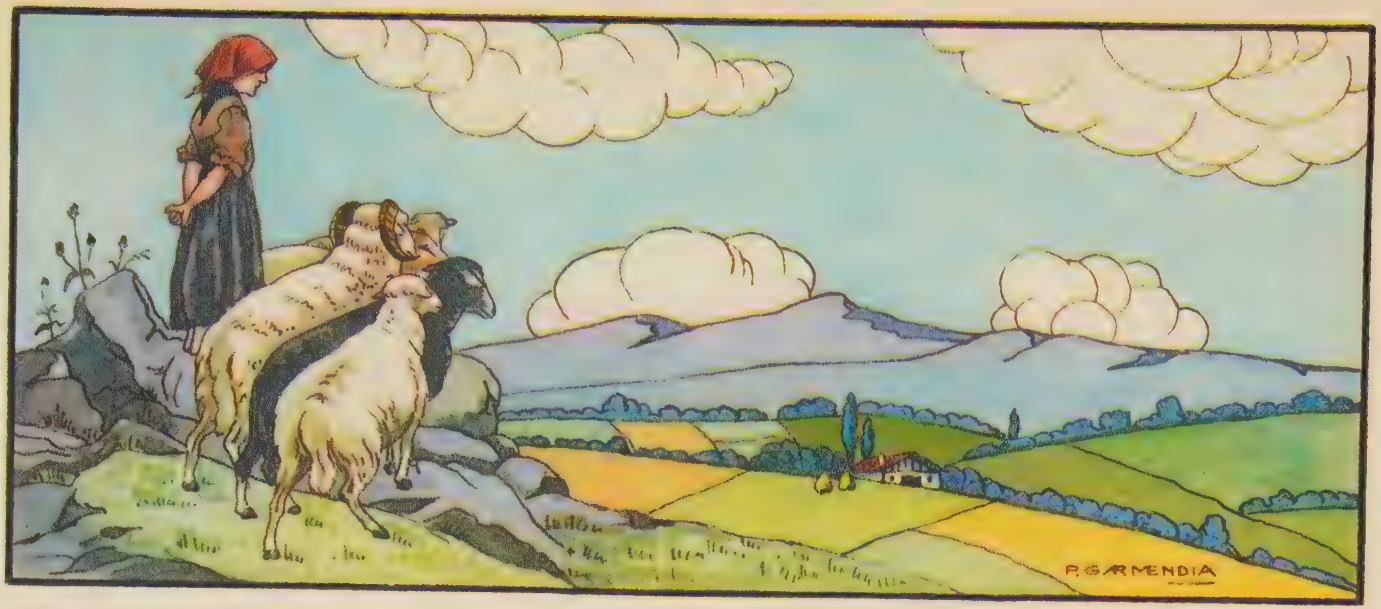
When the children come in Amatchi is sitting in her favorite low chair with Gatua, the cat, close by her side. She has a spindle in her hands and her old fingers twist and twirl as she spins the soft wool into yarn.

"Guess me this riddle, Amatchi," Manesh cries as he flings himself down on the stool at her feet.

"Not until you have washed your hands, my dear child," replies the old woman. Manesh jumps up and goes to the washing sink that is set into the wall of the kitchen. Over his hands he pours cold water from the spout of the clay jar, which he calls a *cruche*. The dirty water runs out of the stone basin through a little hole cut in the stone wall of the house. All the water for cooking and washing in Manesh's home has to be carried from the village fountain. His mother must make several trips there every day. She brings home the full *cruche* balanced on a little cushion that sits snugly on the top of her head.

"Kuru-kuru-kuru! Cock-a-doodle-doo!" Mayi calls out, as she takes her place on the settle by the side of the warm fire. "Oh, Amatchi, lets do 'Cock-a-doodle-doo.' "

"Well, what do you want, Mr. Cock?" Amatchi asks with a smile. She has played this simple game since she



MAYI TENDS THE SHEEP AS THEY GRAZE ON THE HILLS

too was a child and she knows its questions and answers by heart.

"I have a headache."
"Who gave it to you?"
"The Fox gave it to me."
"And where is the Fox?"
"Under the bushes."
"And where are the bushes?"
"The fire has burned them."
"And where is the fire?"
"The water put it out."
"And where is the water?"
"The Ox drank it up."
"And where is the Ox?"
"Sowing the corn."
"And where is the corn?"
"In the chicken house."
"And what are chickens for?"
"To send to the Priest."
"And what are Priests for?"
"To say the prayers."
"And what are prayers for?"
"*To save the whole world.*"

The last words the children shout out together as loudly as they can.

"I have a new riddle I heard in the village," Manesh cries. Only of course he says it in Basque which we would not understand. And if we wrote it here just as he says it, how queer it would look! For each time Manesh asks a riddle he first pronounces these curious words:

"Zük papaïta, nik papaïta,
Nik beitakit, gaizattobat.
Zük balimba bestettobat,
Zer da?"

In English, you and I would say it like this:

"You guess! I guess!
As I know some little thing.
You perhaps know some other thing.
What is this?

"I see it.
It follows me.
But I cannot catch it.
What is it?"

Manesh asks the question. Amatchi smiles. She has heard the riddle before and so she waits to see if Mayi can find the right answer. She thinks and she thinks. But she cannot guess and so she says, "*Ukho,*" which means, "I give my tongue to the cat." She probably says this because

her tongue will not form the words for the right answer. Manesh laughs and tells her that "it" is his shadow. Then comes Mayi's turn. She says:

"You guess! I guess!
As I know some little thing,
You perhaps know some other thing.
What is this—a jar in which there are
two drinks that do not mix with
each other?"

After thinking a while, Manesh guesses the riddle, saying, "I know, it's an egg."

"And now, Amatchi dear, please tell us a story!" Manesh begs as he draws his stool closer to the old woman. So in the dusk, in the light of the leaping flames, as she spins yarn for their stockings, Amatchi also spins for her grandchildren wonderful Basque tales out of the past when the animals talked and fairies and ogres were abroad in the land.

II. THE TALE OF THE SOUTH WIND

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"Long long ago," Amatchi begins smiling, "the people of the tiny mountain village of Larrau used to go each year to help with the cheese making in the four Spanish towns just over the border. Then there came one year when not a man or a boy would stir from his home. No one would say why. But Ianeta who told this story to me thought it was because the Spaniards had spread it abroad that the cheese makers from Larrau carried off many fine cheeses hidden under their blouses.

"The men of the Spanish towns were angry with their neighbors of Larrau because they did not come to help them, and they put their heads together to think up some way to get even.

" 'I have it,' said one. 'We all know that at Larrau, high up there on the mountain, the winter is cold, cold. If

it were not for our South Wind with his warm breezes those people could not live there. They would soon freeze to death if the South Wind did not melt their snow and their ice with his hot breath. The thing we must do is to catch the South Wind, and put him into a strong bag so that this winter he shall not go across to the mountains of France.'

"So the women of the four Spanish villages gathered up all the wool from all the farms in all the countrysides. They spun and they wove. They cut and they sewed until they had made a sack so huge that it would hold the whole top of the mountain of Bimbalet. Then the men of the country set forth to capture the South Wind. When they had found him they struggled and tugged. They pulled and they pushed until at last they forced the Wind into the sack. For fear lest he should carry off both himself and the bag, they weighted it down with piles of huge stones.

"Winter came. Snow, ice, and hail fell on the poor little village of Larrau on its bleak mountainside. The houses were hidden under the snow drifts and the people were almost frozen by the blasts of the icy North Wind and the Black Wind of the West.

" 'Where, oh, where is our friend, the South Wind?' they moaned in Larrau. 'Why does he not come to save us from freezing?' But they looked in vain toward the

WHEN THE SOUTH WIND FELT THE COLD AIR HE RUSHED OUT

mountains of Spain from which in other years the warm South Wind was wont to travel, bringing with him sunshine and breezes as soft as those of the mild month of May.

"No South Wind came! The people of Larrau began to think they would have to give up their homes and go down to live in the valleys. Men of the Spanish towns climbed to the top of a neighboring mountain. And they laughed as they looked at the ice-covered roofs of the village they hated.

"Fortunately for Larrau, there was one old man among them who did not laugh. They called him Old Pedro, and he was the Master of the Baths in one of these four Spanish towns. In the evenings Old Pedro sat by his fireside and rubbed his white head. And he said to himself:

" 'Many of the travelers who come here each summer to visit our town and to take baths in my bath-house are from that same village of Larrau up there in the mountains. If its people should all die in their terrible cold, what would become of my bath-house? I should do no business. No, no, it is not good!'

"At last he decided that he himself would let the South Wind out of the sack. But how? It was a dangerous matter. The Spaniards had given warning that they would kill anyone who tried to help the South Wind to escape. Two men were always on guard at the entrance to the

forest that led to the open place where he lay in his prison.

"One evening Old Pedro hid a sharp knife under his black blouse. He carried a staff hung on his arm and a string of prayer beads in his hands where all could see. He rode on his donkey along the highway until he met the two guardians of the South Wind. They stopped him and said:

" 'Where are you going, O Master of the Baths?'

" 'To say my prayers at the chapel on the other side of the forest,' was Old Pedro's reply.

" 'Very well, you may pass,' they said.

"Pedro tied his donkey to a tree and entered the forest. It was dark. No one was about save the little field mice and the animal creatures that live in the woods. The old man found his way easily to the great sack by the moanings and the groanings of the South Wind, who roared like the sea as he struggled to free himself.

"And just as Old Pedro reached the open space where the sack lay, the moon pushed away the mist and the clouds and shone down upon him with a bright light. He quickly pulled out his knife from its hiding place under his blouse. He drove it into the sack in five or six places, cutting a hole almost as big as a man. The South Wind was at the other end of the bag, but when he felt the cold air come in through the opening he gave a roar like the thunder and rushed out of his prison.

"Poor Old Pedro! He could not get out of the way quickly enough. The South Wind lifted him up and whirled him on and on through the air, letting him fall to earth once again in the market place of his own village. One of his legs was broken, but he had no other hurt. With but a slight limp, he went about his work as Master of the Baths for many long years.

"And the good people of Larrau? The sun shone down on their village. The ice and the snow melted. The sheep and the goats ran and danced in the meadows, and just as with us to-day, when the South Wind blows upon us, everyone was happy and gay."

III. BIDABE AND HIS WITCH BRIDE

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"KURU-KURU-KURU! Kuru-kuru-kuru!"

The little old woman gets quickly up from her low chair at the sound of a rooster crowing out in the darkness. She hurries to throw a pinch of salt into the fire that is blazing on the hearth of the Basque farmhouse kitchen.

"Why do you do that, Amatchi?" Manesh asks as he pulls a roasted chestnut out of the embers.

"Because," replies his grandmother, "when a cock crows at night we may be sure a witch passes. Who knows what spell she might cast on our house? To burn salt breaks the charm."

Mayi runs to the window and peers out into the blackness.

"I can see no one," she says. "Perhaps it was but a neighbor on his way home from the village."

"Even so. But who can be sure that our neighbors will not cast spells upon us, or that they do not belong to the band of the witches?" Amatchi nods her old white head wisely. "They do say that the day of the witches is past, but for me, one can not be too careful. Did I ever tell you what happened to Bidabe and his witch bride?"

"No! No!" Manesh cries, and "Please do, Amatchi," Mayi begs, taking Gatua, the cat, up into her lap, and settling herself comfortably on the bench by the hearth. And as her old fingers busy themselves with her spinning, Amatchi says:

"I am going to tell you a tale that I heard more than fifty years gone. I had it from a good man who would surely not tell a lie, so it must be the truth. It is the story of Bidabe who died long, long ago.

"When Bidabe was a young man he decided it was time to find himself a wife to help him tend his goats and his sheep and to keep his soup pot filled and boiling. He looked about among the girls in his village, and one by one he passed them all by except Kattalin and Iana-mayi. Between these two he found it hard to decide.

"You see, Kattalin was the prettiest girl in the whole countryside; but Iana-mayi was the best of the bread makers. Kattalin's eyes were shining and black; but Iana-

BIDABE WENT TO VISIT THE FAMILY OF HIS BRIDE-TO-BE

mayi was hard-working and good. Kattalin could dance the fandango in a manner to delight the eyes of all beholders; but Iana-mayi went every Sunday to church and everyone spoke well of her.

"However, after thinking and thinking, Bidabe decided he loved Kattalin best. He loved her bright smile and her soft rosy cheeks, and he liked the gay scarf she wore tied round her head. He would not believe certain old folk of the village who whispered behind their hands that Kattalin was a witch. Be she witch or be she fairy, he determined that she was the one he would marry.

"One Saturday evening Bidabe went to pay a visit to the family of his bride-to-be. He had planned as a surprise a pair of fine wooden shoes for his beloved Kattalin. He had cut two pieces of white cherry wood and modeled them to the shape of her dainty foot. This evening he brought with him bits of leather and loops and bright copper tacks. In his pocket were his hammer and awl so that the shoes could be made to fit.

"It was pleasant to sit with Kattalin's family before the huge fireplace. Bidabe cut out the leather, and he bored and he hammered as they all sang songs and told stories and chatted about the affairs of the neighborhood. By the time the shoes were finished the hour was so late that he was urged to spend the night there in Kattalin's home.

" 'We have no extra bed,' Kattalin explained to him, 'but you will be comfortable here on this bench beside the warm fire.' The family took their candles from the high mantel shelf and lighted themselves up the stairway to their bedrooms above, while Bidabe rolled up his coat into a pillow and stretched himself out on the bench. He was soon fast asleep.

"The hands of the old grandfather clock in the corner of the kitchen were pointing to midnight when a faint noise waked the young man. He did not move, but he opened his eyes wide enough to give him a peep at the kitchen in the light of the dying fire. To his surprise he saw Kattalin bending over the hearth. As he watched she lifted out one of the hearthstones. From the hollow space beneath it she took up an earthen bowl which seemed to be filled with some kind of oil.

"Through his half-closed lids Bidabe watched her smear this oil on her body. He saw her bend down over the embers, and then *pouf!* away up the chimney she went. Poor Bidabe! He covered his eyes with his hands and he groaned to himself, 'Alas and alack! The old women are right. My Kattalin is a witch.'

"Then at a sudden thought he jumped up from his bench. He saw that the bowl was still almost half full, and as Kattalin had done, he rubbed his body with the oil. Before he knew what had happened he felt himself

flying out through the chimney. Up, up into the air, and on, on, over valley and hill, he sailed like a bird.

"Bidabe came to earth in a plain near a great forest where he found himself in the midst of a crowd of dancing women and men, all dressed in fine clothes. He knew at once that they were witches, and that he was watching one of their midnight revels. His eyes opened wide as he saw there many of the folk of his village, among them his Kattalin clad in a robe of the brightest red silk. The poor young man kept to the edge of the crowd. He tried to hide, for he feared what might happen if he should be discovered.

"As the witches danced about him he learned many things. He heard of the magic that can be worked with a wand of stripped hollywood. He found out what diseases can be cured by the tail of a little mole, and he learned how a man can pass through a keyhole. Many other secrets of magic came to his ears, but he made no sound for very fear of his life.

"At last the witches formed a circle about a high throne upon which was seated an ugly fat man with a round face and with flapping ears that looked like two huge cabbage leaves. He seemed to be the king of these creatures. As they marched slowly before him each one made a low bow and planted a kiss upon his great toe.

"Bidabe watched them in awe-struck silence. He

scratched his ear as he thought to himself, 'I shall surely have to march up there with the rest, but may I be bewitched if I give that ugly creature such a salute.'

"Nearer and nearer came his turn. Finally he stood just in front of the Witch King. He slyly took from his pocket the awl he had used to make Kattalin's wooden shoes, and with a swift dart of his hand he plunged it straight into the chest of the Witch King. Thunder roared! Lightning cut the skies in two! The earth seemed to tremble, and then all was blackness.

"When Bidabe came to himself again he found that he was lying in a thicket of prickly thorn bushes at the bottom of a ravine. For eight days and nights he tried to find his way out. And when at last he limped up to the door of his home he was so ill that he had to lie in his bed for more than two months.

"The very first morning after he was about again Bidabe made his way to the house of the gentle Iana-mayi who, he could be sure, was not a witch. They were married the very next month; and if they lived well, I am sure they died well too."

IV. THE DANCING GYPSY

IV. THE DANCING GYPSY

MANESH and Mayi are dancing the fandango in the center of the huge kitchen of their farmhouse home. Their father is playing a gay tune on his accordion as he sits in his place on the bench by the fire, while their mother and their grandmother are directing their movements. Now and then their father jumps up from his seat to show them a new step. In his youth he was one of the best fandango dancers in all the village of Azcar, and even now on fête days he likes to join a group of his young friends as they go through this favorite dance of the Basques.

"Now this way! Now that! Hold your arms higher, Mayi! Snap your fingers, Manesh! Twist and turn! Keep in front of each other! Move your feet faster! Around

and around! Tum-ti-tum-tum. Tum-ti-tum-ti-tum. Tum-ti-tum-tum."

All Basques like to dance. This very afternoon there has been a fête in the village. The children have divided their time there in watching the pelota game on the court near the church and the fandangos in the open place where, seated high on a table under the great oak, Pedro and Jean, the two village musicians, played gay music for the dancing groups of young people.

"Good! Good!" Amatchi cries as her grandchildren give a last whirl and drop breathless down on their low stools at her side. "A year or so more and you may dance as well as your father and mother did when they were young."

"Oh, Amatchi dear," Mayi says in a pleading voice, "please tell us once more the story of the dancing gypsy and the poor weeping princess."

"Why, child, you have heard that old tale a full twenty times. Surely you cannot want to hear it again," the old woman protests.

"But I do," cries the little girl. "I like it almost the best of all the stories you tell."

"Very well, dear," her grandmother says smiling, "you shall have it once more.

"Once upon a time there was a good and beautiful princess named Mayiana. She was about to be married to her neighbor, Chanchin, a handsome young prince whom

she had loved ever since she was a child. It was the eve of their wedding day. Mayiana's palace was ringing with music and singing and the shouts of the people who were rejoicing in the happiness of the young couple. Suddenly, toward the end of the festivities, it was found that Chan-chin had disappeared. Mayiana ran hither and thither through the rooms of the great palace, looking for her lost bridegroom, and all joined in the hunt. They searched and they searched, in every nook and corner of the house and the gardens, in the fields and even out on the high-road. But no trace of the prince could they uncover.

"At last the poor Princess Mayiana fell fainting into the arms of her ladies-in-waiting, who carried her to her bed in her room in the palace tower. There she lay for months in a high fever, at the very point of death, and it was only by the efforts of all the doctors in the kingdom that she was at last brought back to life. When she was able to leave her bed her maidens discovered that their gay smiling princess was gone, leaving in her place a pale dumb creature who sat all day long, her hands in her lap, with streams of great tears flowing down her wan cheeks. She spoke no word. To be sure, her heart beat and all could see she still breathed; but she seemed as one dead as she sat motionless by her window gazing at nothing at all through the tears that filled her eyes.

"Her father, the King, became almost distracted at the

plight of his poor daughter. Musicians were hired to sing gay songs under her window. Horses bringing companies of merry guests galloped into the courtyard, and the hunters with their dogs brought in the fruits of their chase and laid them before her. But no flicker of interest lighted her blank face. It was as if her soul had left her body, never to return.

"Three years went by with no word from Chanchin. The Princess grew paler and thinner until at last her father feared that she would die if some means could not be found to rouse her from her sorrow.

" 'Call in the star gazers,' he commanded, sending his messengers to summon the wisest men in the land to read the fate of his daughter in the stars of the heavens. With their long pointed bonnets and their curious black robes these soothsayers crossed the drawbridge of the palace and mounted to the tower room of the Princess. They stood long watching the weeping Mayiana as she sat still as a statue in her place by the window. Then they put their heads together and buried their noses in huge books about the stars.

" 'The Princess Mayiana will die,' they announced solemnly, 'unless something is done to bring a smile to her lips. She will be wholly cured and her soul will come back to her only when she has laughed three times, loud and long.' And with that they departed to their homes, their

books under their arms, leaving the King sadder than before. For he knew of no way to dry the tears of his dear daughter and he had vainly tried every means possible to bring a laugh to her lips.

"Not long after this, one sunny spring morning, the palace people were wakened by a strange noise in the courtyard. The stillness of the dawn was broken by the music of drums and of flutes, and by strange cries and shouts that brought all to their windows. What a sight met their eyes! Below them was a group of gypsy dancers, some twenty young men dressed in suits of red and gold, and shod in white sandals laced with bright scarlet cords. Ribbons of all colors floated from their broad shoulders while tiny bells fixed to their red garters tinkled as they moved this way and that. To the notes of their weird music they jumped and they twirled, they leaped and they bounded from one side of the courtyard to the other in dances such as never had been seen there before.

"Her ladies-in-waiting hastened to lead the sad Mayiana to her seat at the window. 'Here at last is something that may wake her up,' they thought to themselves.

"Around and around, backward and forward, went the gypsies, with their feet flashing like lightning. Suddenly one of the ladies-in-waiting, who had kept her eyes fixed on the face of her princess, gave a little cry, 'Oh!' and, turning, she sped away to find the King.

" 'Sire! Sire!' she cried, almost breathless, 'the Princess has smiled.'

" 'Are you sure?' asked the King. 'When and how did it happen?'

" 'I am sure, Sire,' she replied. 'It was only the tiniest ghost of a smile, but it came into her eyes as she watched those gypsies dancing there in the courtyard.'

" 'Send for the star gazers!' The King gave the command in the greatest excitement. 'Bid them come in haste and tell those gypsy dancers at all costs to go on with their leaping and dancing.'

"The wise men in their pointed caps and black gowns, with their books under their arms, again crossed the drawbridge and made their way quickly to the tower room where the Princess sat looking out of the window. Solemnly they peered into her face. There was no smile on her lips, but deep in her eyes they found the tiny ghost of a smile that the lady-in-waiting had seen. They nodded their heads as they looked from one to another. They turned the leaves of their books and then they called the King and the dancers together at one end of the courtyard.

" 'Ah, valiant gypsy dancers,' cried the soothsayers, 'you have worked the impossible. By you, if you will it, shall the Princess be cured. For if you will dance under her window through three journeys of the sun from the east to the west, her soul will come back to her through the

laughter your nimble antics will bring to her lips. But mind you, should you cease before the time set, and before she has laughed three times, loud and long, she will slip again into the darkness in which she has been sunk for three years past. So we read the heavens.'

"The King offered rich rewards to the gypsies if they would but dance without stopping until the sun had set for the third time. Again the flute and the drum rang out through the palace gardens and all day long the gypsies bounded and leaped, twisting and twirling and giving forth the curious cries of their strange dances.

"Next morning at the first sound of the gypsy music the Princess rose eagerly from her bed. She hastened to the window where, her tears at last dried, she sat gazing upon the dancers with the ghost of a smile still in her eyes. On and on danced the gypsies. Hour after hour went by until at last their strength began to give out. One by one, they dropped fainting on the stones of the courtyard, and neither food nor drink seemed to give them the force to go on with the dance. When the red sun set in the west at the close of the second day only four of the young men were left on their feet.

"Among them, there was one dressed more finely than all the others. On his red coat there was more of the gay golden trimming; on his head was a diadem studded with pearls; and he rode a make-believe horse with trappings of

lace and a bridle of silver. A mask covered his face so that no one could tell what manner of man he might be, but by his flashing feet all knew him to be the master dancer of the troupe. It was his lightning step that held the eyes and the interest of the Princess Mayiana.

"The sun rose the third day. The King was sick with fear that the master dancer and his three companions might not be able to hold out until the time set by the soothsayers. He held his breath as he watched their failing steps grow slower and slower. At last when the sun stood high in the heavens one of the gypsies fell to the ground and had to be carried off into the palace. Then another! And another! Until at last when the palace bells sounded the midday call there was left only the master dancer and his make-believe horse.

" 'Ah, can you but hold out,' the King cried to him in his anguish, 'you shall have anything up to the half of my kingdom.'

"Pausing only an instant in his dance, the gypsy replied: 'I can dance on to the end, but I will do so only if you promise to give me the hand of the Princess Mayiana in marriage.' Now the thought of giving his beloved daughter to an unknown gypsy dancer was not pleasing to the King, but he was forced to consent, for he knew that her very life depended upon this dancer's going on.

"On and on! Around and around! In and out, the feet

of the gypsy flashed in the dance. Some mysterious strength seemed to be given him, for he leaped higher and higher into the air. He bent down to the ground, shaking his bells and his gay shoulder ribbons, and his sandaled feet struck the cobblestones of the courtyard with just as much force as on the first morning.

"At last the joyous notes of the sunset trumpet sounded the close of the battle. At the same moment through the tower room and down the long halls of the palace there echoed forth the merry laugh of the Princess Mayiana. Once, twice, thrice she laughed, loud and long as the star gazers had wished, while all in the palace cheered at the sound. Color returned to her pale cheeks. Her eyes flashed and sparkled as brightly as of old, as she stood with her father facing the young gypsy dancer.

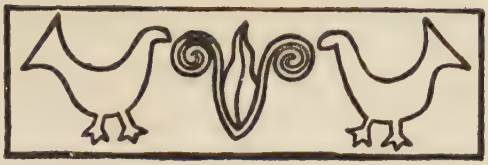
" 'My daughter, come thank him who has brought you back to life and to reason. As his reward, I have promised that you shall become his bride.'

" 'Sir, I do thank you,' the Princess replied, 'but marry you I cannot, for my heart is another's. I shall wed no one but my own Prince Chanchin, who will, I am sure, return to me some day.'

" 'Yet, you may still marry me, for I am Chanchin,' the gypsy dancer cried, as he snatched the mask from his face. He told her of the gypsies who had carried him off as he strolled on the palace terrace on the eve of their

wedding, of how he had not been able to escape from them, and how he had joined their group of wandering dancers in the hope of one day finding his way again to this palace and to his beloved lost bride. And so Mayiana and her handsome Chanchin were married at last, and she was so happy I am sure she laughed all the days of her life."

V. THE FAIRY AND THE SPINNING WOMAN



V. THE FAIRY AND THE SPINNING WOMAN

It is evening in the Basque farmhouse where Manesh and Mayi live. Their supper of porridge and bread and thick vegetable soup is all eaten up. Mayi has helped her mother with washing the dishes and sweeping the floor, while Manesh has brought in armfuls of logs to keep the fire blazing bright on the broad hearth. The children have now seated themselves close to the long black skirts of their grandmother in the hope that she will tell them a story before the tall clock by the stairs sounds the hour for bedtime.

Amatchi is spinning. Her old fingers fly as she twists the wool into yarn with soft curious sounds of *frin, frin, firun, firun.* Her eyes are bent on her work, and Manesh finds it hard to attract her attention to the whistle he is whittling from a piece of soft wood.

"Amatchi, please look!" he cries impatiently. "Look, see what I am making. You keep your eyes so close on your spinning that a fairy or a witch might creep in through the keyhole without your even seeing her."

"True, my child, true," his grandmother replies, smiling and raising her eyes for the briefest of glances at the eager lad at her side. "I am just like the spinning woman in the tale of the fairy who came in a cloud of smoke down through the chimney."

"Didn't the spinning woman see the fairy?" Mayi asks eagerly.

"Not until she was seated on the bench by the fire," says the old woman. "I will tell you the whole story if you will not interrupt me with matters that cause me to put down my work. The winter is coming, and we shall need all the yarn we can make from our wool.

"Once long ago in a certain house there lived an old man and an old woman. The old man always grew tired in the evenings, and he often went to bed leaving his old wife seated in her place by the fireside, spinning with a *frin, frin, firun, firun.*

"And every night as the old wife sat busy at her work there came to her side a fairy in the form of a lady dressed all in gray. The spinning woman could never quite tell how the fairy got into her kitchen, for she always came at a moment when her eyes were bent on her spinning.

The old wife thought that she flew down the chimney in a cloud of gray smoke, but she could not be sure. One moment she was alone; the next moment, there was the fairy sitting on the fireside bench, crying, '*Chitchi 'ta papa, papa buchtia,*' which was the old way of saying, 'Meat and bread, bread and gravy.'

"The old wife was afraid of this strange fairy woman dressed all in gray. At first she pretended not to hear what she said, but the fairy would cry over and over, and louder and louder, '*Chitchi 'ta papa, papa buchtia;* Meat and bread, bread and gravy.' And her tone grew so angry that at last the old woman put down her spinning and got out the frying pan. As soon as the ham began to sizzle over the coals the fairy would smile and pat her stomach hungrily, or clap her hands together in great delight. She would not go away until she had eaten all the old woman had cooked.

"Night after night for several weeks this same thing took place. A tiny rustle of cloth in the midst of the stillness of the quiet kitchen, and the old woman would look up to see the gray fairy sitting there on the *züzülü,* waiting for her meal of meat, bread, and gravy. The old wife did not tell her husband at first for she hoped every night that the fairy would not come again.

"One evening the old man's sleep was disturbed. In his dream it seemed to him that he heard voices, and that

someone was talking with his wife in the kitchen downstairs. When at last she came up to go to bed he said to her:

" 'Tell me, wife, did I not hear voices down in the kitchen? Were you not talking to someone?'

" 'Yes,' replied the old woman.

" 'Who could it be at this time of night?' the old man asked curiously.

" 'Well, I don't know myself,' said his wife. 'I don't know who or what it was. It was a strange creature in gray—it may be a witch, it may be a fairy. She has been coming down our chimney every night for three weeks, and each time she comes she straightway cries out, "*Chitchi 'ta papa, papa buchtia;* meat and bread, bread and gravy!" '

" 'And you give them to her?'

" 'What can I do? She will not go away until her stomach is filled.'

" 'True,' said the old man, 'it was good to give what she asked. But it is not good that she should come at this hour into our house. She cannot mean well by us. I have noticed these last days that our oxen are ailing and that our sheep do not eat. It must be the work of this wicked fairy. We must rid ourselves of her. To-morrow I shall take your place by the fire, and we shall soon see whether I am not right.'

"The next evening the old wife went to bed early and

the man dressed himself up in her clothes. He put on her long black dress and her black apron. He tied her plaid shawl over his shoulders and wound her black kerchief tight round his head. Indeed he looked enough like his old wife to deceive even a fairy. Taking his seat in the corner by the fire, he began to spin.

"Soon out of the corner of his eye he saw a cloud of smoke rushing down from the chimney, and when it cleared away, there near by on the fireside bench sat the fairy woman in gray.

" '*Chitchi 'ta papa, papa buchtia;* meat and bread, bread and gravy,' the fairy cried. But the old man made as if he did not understand. He went right on spinning harder than before. *Fran, fran, furdulu, furdulu,* his fingers flew like the lightning. The fairy seemed puzzled.

" 'How fast you are working to-night,' she said.

" 'Yes,' replied the old man. 'Yesterday I went smoothly *frin, frin, firun, firun;* to-day I go jerkily *fran, fran, furdulu, furdulu.*' And he kept right on spinning, watching the fairy from the corner of his eye. He had seen right away that she was indeed a fairy, and not a good fairy either. He felt more than ever that in some way or other he must rid the house of her.

"The fairy too felt that something was wrong. She did not guess that this was not the old woman who fed her every night, but she began to ask questions.

" 'You do not seem the same as usual to-night,' she cried to the spinner. 'How hard your face looks! What is your name?'

" 'My name is Neorec,' the old man replied, and that meant but little for 'neorec' is, as we all know, just one way of maying, 'Me, Myself.'

" 'Well, Me, Myself,' said the fairy, 'I am weary with waiting. *Chitchi 'ta papa, papa buchtia;* meat and bread, bread and gravy! And be quick about it.'

"So the old man got out the frying pan and began to cook thick slices of ham in a fine gravy. The delighted fairy patted her stomach, now and then pausing to clap her hands together, and saying over and over, '*Chitchi 'ta papa, papa buchtia;* meat and bread, bread and gravy!'

"Soon the gravy was bubbling and brown. The old man grasped the handle of the frying pan, and with a sudden move he threw the burning grease straight into the face of the wicked fairy. With a loud scream she rose from her seat and flew out of the chimney into the air where, with a terrible clamor, she called all her fairy friends to her. With her hands covering her burned face, she moaned and she groaned, she screeched and she screamed. Her companions begged her to be calm, saying that in such a hubbub they could never find out what was the matter. At last the poor fairy grew quiet enough to tell them of how she had been burned.

" 'Who has hurt you so?' cried her friends in great anger. 'Just tell us his name! We will make him pay well.'

" 'It was Neorec [Me, Myself],' replied the poor fairy weeping. The other fairies were angry, for they thought that their sister was making sport of them. So they answered her curtly, saying:

" 'Well, if you have done it yourself, cure it yourself! What do you want with us? Surely you do not want us to punish yourself?'

"And they flew away at once into the dark night."

VI. DOMINIK-TEKUN

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"KERCHOO-OO-OO-OO!"

Manesh sneezes so loudly that he wakes Gatua, the cat, who is sleeping in front of the fireplace. His grandmother looks up from her spinning and cries out quickly, "*Dominik-tekun,*" which is, as everyone knows, just one other way of saying, "God bless you."

"Why do you always cry '*Dominik-tekun*' whenever we sneeze, Amatchi?" Mayi asks her grandmother.

"So that the bad fairies may not carry you off as they did the poor babes of the House of Garibay," is the old woman's reply. "You see, when we sneeze we put ourselves in the hands of the fairies that fill the air all about us. Now the fairies and witches must all disappear when

they hear the name of the good God that takes care of us. We must say 'God bless you' when we sneeze, to drive them away."

"Did the fairies carry live babies away from the House of Garibay?" Manesh asks curiously.

"That they did!" says Amatchi. "Whenever a baby was born into that house there was the greatest rejoicing, for the Garibays were good people who dearly loved children. But their joy never lasted, for scarcely had they taken the tiny newcomer into their arms when something always happened and the babe disappeared. One! Two! Three! Four!—Four fine sturdy infants had vanished one after the other from the very arms of their nurse, and the good Garibays did not know what to think.

"At last the time drew near for the birth of their fifth child. The House of Garibay was filled with excitement. The father and mother, the menservants and the maidservants, all put their heads together to try to find a way to keep this baby from disappearing. But as they did not know what it was that caused their infants to vanish, they could think of no sure means of preventing it from happening again.

"The baby was born—such a beautiful child that it looked like an angel. As those of the House of Garibay stood by its cradle they all fell to weeping, for the

thought of losing so lovely a child was more than they could bear without tears.

"At the same time, out on the highroad there came walking, softly, softly, a certain young man who was really a thief. He had heard of the birth of the fifth child of the Garibays, and he said to himself: 'They will be so delighted and there will be such confusion that they will pay no attention to me. It is a fine time for me to steal a fat sheep out of their flock.' And he made his way on tiptoe through the bushes near the house, where to his surprise he met an old woman.

" 'What are you doing here, my son?' she said.

" 'I am going to steal a fat sheep out of the flock of the House of Garibay,' he answered. 'There has just been born to that house a beautiful child. They will surely take no notice of my doings in the midst of their excitement.'

" 'I too am going to the House of Garibay,' the old woman cried with a chuckle. 'I am the fairy who has carried off all their infants and I am now going to get the one that is just born.'

" 'And how can you do that?' the young thief asked her.

" 'Easily, easily!' the fairy woman boasted, 'When a child sneezes in that house no one ever thinks to say *Dominik-tekun.* It will be the same with the new-born

one. It will sneeze and I shall be able to grab it from its nurse and fly away with it out through the chimney.'

"After that the young man and the old woman parted; and both went on their different ways to the House of Garibay. The young thief stopped for a moment to peer into the window of the kitchen, where to his surprise he saw that all of the household, gathered about the child's cradle, had great tears streaming down over their cheeks.

"Now although this young man was truly a thief, he had a soft heart. He felt very sorry for these poor weeping people. Hardly thinking what he was doing, he knocked on their door. The Master opened it to him and invited him into the kitchen.

" 'Why all this weeping, good people?' he cried. 'I had thought that to-day there would be only rejoicing in the House of Garibay.'

" 'Ah, we do indeed rejoice greatly,' the Master explained, 'but we fear the disaster that is sure to come to us. Our child has been born, but ah, but——' And he fell to weeping again.

" 'But what, O Master of the House of Garibay?' asked the soft-hearted thief.

" 'It is that our children are all spirited away from us almost as soon as they take their first breath. We have already lost four, one after the other, and now we weep as we wait for the turn of this poor little one.'

" 'Is that all?' cried the soft-hearted thief. 'I will help you. Yes, I will help you, even if I should have to lose my fat sheep. A few moments ago I was out on the high-road, walking ever so softly toward your house, for I had it in mind to steal a fat sheep out of your flock. As I came through the bushes I met an old woman who boasted to me that she was the fairy who steals your babies away, and from her I learned the charm that will save that little one lying there in his cradle. Let the nurse take the child up into her arms, and be sure that she does just as I tell her.'

"Wondering, the nurse clasped the babe to her breast. Feeling the cool air upon its head, the child sneezed, 'Kerchoo-oo' and at once the soft-hearted thief called out loudly: '*Dominik-tekun,*' or 'God bless you!' A shrill scream filled the kitchen, while from behind the door a voice screeched:

" 'You have betrayed me. Curses on you, young man! A thousand curses be upon your wicked head!' And with a rush the old fairy woman flew across the room to the fireplace and went up through the chimney.

"Their baby was saved! The Master of the House of Garibay fell down on his knees, weeping with joy and crying out his thanks to the soft-hearted thief for saving his child. Then he led him out to his flock of sheep and bade him choose the fattest of all as his reward.

"Since then, thanks to this young man, not a child has disappeared from all the country about the House of Garibay; for with each sickness or sneeze the mothers hasten to cry, just as I do, '*Dominik-tekun,*' or 'God bless you,' and the wicked fairies are forced to fly straight away."

VII. THE FLIES OF MENDIONDO

VII. THE FLIES OF MENDIONDO

"Mayi! Mayi! Make haste with the chickens. The breakfast basket is ready and your mother will be hungry. It is two hours and more since she went to the brook with the washing."

Amatchi calls to Mayi who is feeding the fowls in the dooryard of the farmhouse. The old woman hands the little girl a basket covered with a white cloth, and stands in the doorway to watch her as she hurries off down the road.

Twice each month Mayi's mother rises while the stars are still bright in the heavens. She packs the soiled clothes of her family into a great basket. She does not forget to put in with them the great wooden club which she uses to beat out the dirt, her scrubbing board of smooth walnut wood, and some thick squares of gray soap. Load-

ing all on a low wheelbarrow, she trundles it off to a shady spot beside the brook that runs through the woods at the second turn of the road.

It is there that Mayi finds her mother hard at work when she brings her the breakfast basket with its plate of ham and eggs, its bottle of wine, and its loaf of corn bread. Mayi's mother has placed a number of big stones in a circle to dam up the rushing brook into a quiet pond. She has thrown the dirty linen into the clear water. Long before she can see her Mayi hears the thud, thud, thud of the wooden beater pounding the wet cloth against the smooth surface of the scrubbing board. Sounds of talking and laughing tell her that the neighboring housewives are also washing to-day.

"I do not like wash day," Mayi grumbles to her grandmother upon her return to the farmhouse, as she begins to prepare the vegetables for the huge soup pot. "I do not like to stay home from school and work, work, work, all the day long. I am glad we wash only twice in a month."

"Tut! Tut!" Amatchi replies. "Who is to do the work of our house when your mother is absent? We are not like Mendiondo with his fairy flies. We must do it ourselves."

"Mendiondo? What fairy flies?" Mayi asks eagerly, her troubles quickly forgotten in the thought of a story.

"Mendiondo was a farmer who lived long, long ago when people still believed in the fairy folk and when wonderful things happened before their very eyes. Mendiondo was like you, Mayi, my child. He was lazy. He did not like to work. He lay late in his bed. He sat for long hours idle in the sheltered corner of the north wall of his house. He was never seen to put his hand to the plow. Yet his farm looked neater than any other in the whole countryside.

" 'How can it be?' the neighbors asked of each other. 'Mendiondo does no work at all, so far as we can see. Yet his beasts are early out in the pastures. His hay is the first to be stored away in his loft. His garden has always more vegetables than ours.'

"One morning, as his neighbors passed by on their way to the market, they noticed that Mendiondo's wheat stood ready for harvest, its heavy heads bending down in the soft breezes. No one was seen working there during the day, yet when they came back at evening the whole field was cut. They shook their heads and they wondered. They could not understand it. Many a one thought so much about the strange matter of Mendiondo that he could not keep his mind upon his own work.

"Mendiondo's wife was as puzzled as her neighbors. She often scolded her husband for his idle ways, but he always replied, 'But are we not fed and housed? Is not

our farm perfect?' When she asked him to tell her by what magic it was done, he would shake his head and refuse to say another word. So she determined that she would find out for herself. She began to watch her husband. For many days she did not let him out of her sight, from dawn until dark.

"But she had no success until one fine Sunday morning when they were walking to church. Dressed in his best white shirt and black velveteen trousers, with his *makila,* his stout cane, in his hand, Mendiondo stalked ahead proudly as any good Basque should, leaving his wife to trudge along behind. Suddenly she saw him dart into a thicket at the side of the road and she said to herself, 'Aha! The secret must be in there.' So when they had gone a few steps farther she called to him, saying:

" 'Husband, I forgot and left the soup pot boiling away on the fire. It surely will burn. I must go back. Do you go on without me; I will come later.'

"As soon as Mendiondo was out of sight around the turn of the road she made her way into the thicket. She hunted and hunted among the leaves and the bushes to see what her husband had left there. At last she caught a glint of bright yellow in the hollow trunk of a tree. Putting in her hand carefully, she drew out a small golden box curiously carved. She lifted the lid. Out flew ten huge flies that buzzed loudly around her head and flew about her

THEY SWARMED AROUND, BUZZING, "GIVE US MORE WORK!"

eyes and her ears, crying, 'What are we to do now? What are we to do now?'

"The woman was frightened at first and said quickly, 'Oh, go back into your box! Go back into your box!' To her surprise the flies obeyed her. She fastened the lid and laid the golden box back where her husband had hidden it.

"When later she told him what she had done, he said, 'Well, now that you have found out the secret, I may as well tell you that those are fairy flies who do all my work for me. There is but one condition. When they ask for work I must give it them or they will fly away and never return.'

" 'Wonderful! Marvelous!' Mendiondo's wife exclaimed. 'They might as well do my work for me, too.'

"And from that day, the neighbors had more things to puzzle over. As the women met at the fountain with their water jars on their heads they whispered to one another:

" 'How is it we never see the wife of Mendiondo at the washing place any more? Yet there on the line hang her husband's shirts even whiter than ours. Smoke never rises now from the bake oven beside her door. Yet her larder is full of fine round loaves of bread. What can be the answer to this strange riddle?'

"But the wife of Mendiondo was not so happy as she

had thought she would be with no work to do. The fairy flies did her sweeping and dusting, her cooking and baking, her gardening and washing, and they did it all so quickly that she could not get her breath before they would come flying about her asking for more work.

"One day as they swarmed around her ears, buzzing, 'Work! Work! Work! Give us more work to do!' she grew impatient and said, 'Go fill that barrel in the wine shed with water. Take this sieve and bring the water from the brook in the pasture.' And she thought to herself, 'Now at last I shall have peace, for it will surely take them a long time to carry water in a sieve so full of holes.'

"But in less than a minute, there the flies were again, buzzing about her poor aching head with their cry of 'Work! Work! Give us more work to do.'

"At last she could stand it no longer and she said to her husband, 'This is far worse than doing our own work ourselves. We must get rid of those flies.'

"The farmer was worn out too with their demands for more and more work and he agreed with his wife that the time had come for the fairy flies to go.

" 'But we must pay them their wages for they have served us well. What shall we give them?'

" 'See, there above the house are flying ten fine geese,'

cried the woman. 'Let us give those to the fairy flies as their well-earned wages.'

"So Mendiondo called the flies to him and said, 'Alas, we have no more work for you, but for wages we will give you those ten fine geese that fly there above us.'

"Just then the geese flew out of sight and the flies of Mendiondo followed them. They were never seen nor heard of again, and the minds of their neighbors became peaceful once more, for Mendiondo took up his scythe again and his wife worked from morn until night about their house and their farm. And, though you may not believe it, they were happy in doing so."

VIII. ASHERIA, THE CRAFTY RED FOX

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"Oh, Amatchi, look at Gatua!" Mayi points to the black cat sitting on the tiled floor of the kitchen. "See how she puts her head on one side. It seems as though she were listening and understood every word we are saying."

"Who can say she does not?" replies the old grandmother as she sits by the fireside shelling corn into a pot on the lap of her black cotton apron. "There was a time when all the animals could talk and when they were quite as well off as we men and women. The people of those days had to look sharply that the beasts did not get the best of them, for their eyes were keen and their wits were quick. If you do not believe it I will tell you the tale of Asheria, the Crafty Red Fox, and his three truths.

"One day Asheria, the Crafty Red Fox, was hungry.

As he stood by the roadside a shepherd, who lived near him, passed by on his way to drive his sheep to the pasture; and the Fox said to himself, 'There must be good milk and cream in that shepherd's house. I must plan how to steal it and give myself a good feast.'

"He thought and he thought, but he could scheme out no way to get the shepherd's cream without someone to help him. Just then there came walking by his friend, the Gray Wolf.

"Asheria jumped up and stopped the Wolf, saying, 'Wolf! Wolf! You and I ought to make ourselves a fine feast of milk and cream from the house of yonder shepherd. I have thought out a plan. The shepherd will leave his sheep alone in the field with only the dog to watch them. Then he will go back to his house to do his morning's work. As soon as the sheep are alone you must go in among them and howl, "Uhur, Uhur!" The dog will bark and the shepherd will leave his house and come running to find out what is the matter. While he is gone from home I will steal the milk and the cream, and when we meet later under the oak tree at the crossways we will share it between us.'

"The Wolf did as he was told, and while the shepherd was gone Asheria, the Crafty Red Fox, crept into the farmhouse and made off with a great pot of sweet milk and cream. He hurried to the meeting place, but once

there he did not wait for his partner. Instead, carefully, carefully skimming off the cream, he drank up all the milk. Then he filled the pot with earth and poured the cream back on top to cover it up.

"At last the Wolf arrived, hungry and out of breath, for the shepherd had chased him far over the fields. The Crafty Red Fox showed him the pot, saying, 'Now we will divide the spoils. As you see, the top is the cream, and everyone knows that cream is far better than milk. So he who takes the top should choose only that, and the other should have what is beneath.'

"The Gray Wolf was good-natured and kind. So he said, 'I do not wish the top. I will take what is beneath.'

"And Asheria ate up every bit of cream. He then gave the pot full of dirt to his poor cheated friend. The Gray Wolf was angry, but the Crafty Red Fox only shrugged his shoulders and said, 'How is it my fault? It must be that the shepherd makes his cream like that.'

"Another day Asheria again felt the pangs of hunger. He saw a boy pass down the road, carrying their midday dinner to some men at work in the fields farther on. Looking up at the branch of the tree under which he was standing, he spied a blackbird and said:

" 'Ah, good-morning, friend Blackbird, are you not hungry? You and I both need a good meal. We shall have it if you will only do as I say. That boy going down

the road is carrying a basket of food. You must walk in front of him, limping as if you could not go faster. When he tries to catch you, you must keep just ahead and lead him away. He will put down his basket to run after you, and while he is chasing you I will snatch up the basket and take it to the oak tree at the crossroads. When you come, we will divide it and we will have a fine feast.'

"The Blackbird did as the Red Fox had told him. Sure enough, the boy set down the basket to follow the bird fluttering before him, and Asheria snatched it up quickly and ran away with it. Wicked beast that he was, he did not go to the oak tree at the crossroads, as he had promised the Blackbird. Instead, he went to his own den where he stuffed himself with the farmers' dinner, eating the Blackbird's share as well as his own.

"As he licked his lips and rubbed his full stomach, he said to himself, 'I must go away. The Wolf is my foe and the Blackbird surely hates me by now. Something may happen to me if I stay here. I had best go over to the other side of the river.'

"He put on his blouse and his beret and trotted down to the edge of the water, where he called out to a boatman who happened to pass:

" 'Ho, man, ho! Take me over the river in that boat of yours!'

" 'What will you give me?' the man demanded.

" 'Ah, I will tell you three great truths' was the reply of the Crafty Red Fox. 'If I do not speak truly I will pay you well for the journey.'

"The boatman agreed. He had never known Asheria to tell the truth about anything, and he was sure in the end he would have to pay for his trip.

"As they left the bank Asheria said to the boatman, 'Some people say that corn bread is just as good as wheaten bread, but that is a lie. Wheat bread is better. Is not that one truth?' And the boatman had to admit that this indeed was true.

"When they were in the middle of the river, the Red Fox said again, 'People say, too, "What a fine night! It is just as clear as the day." That is a lie. The day is always clearer than night. That is my second truth.'

"And he told the boatman the third truth as they neared the opposite bank of the river.

" 'Oh, man, man!' cried the Fox. 'Your pantaloons are shabby indeed, but you will have to wear worse ones if you do not ferry over people who pay you more than I.'

"And as the Red Fox leaped out of the boat onto the shore the boatman shook his head ruefully and said, 'Alas, that is too true.' "

"Did that really happen, Amatchi?" Manesh asks as his grandmother finishes her tale.

"Who knows?" she replies. "It was my grandmother who told me the story of Asheria, the Crafty Red Fox. It seems to me that she said she was standing at the very edge of the river and heard it all for herself."

IX. THE BOY WHO TALKED WITH THE BIRDS

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"I WISH I could hear the animals talk," says Manesh, as his grandmother finishes her story of the Crafty Red Fox and his clever tricks.

"You do hear them, all about you," is the old woman's reply. "You hear Nagarro bark that a stranger is near. You hear Gatua miaou for her evening bowl of skim milk. And you hear the Black Hen telling the other fowls about it when she has laid an egg."

"But we cannot understand them nor talk with them as the boatman talked with Asheria," cries Mayi.

"No, that you cannot," Amatchi says smiling. "That is one thing they do not teach you in school nowadays. For that you must have a special ear like that of Piarres, who talked with the birds."

"Could he really talk with the birds?" Manesh asks, his eyes wide with wonder.

"Fetch another log for the hearth and I will tell you the tale as it was told to me. Then you can judge for yourselves," says Amatchi. And as the sparks fly up the chimney and the new log takes fire she begins her story in the old, old Basque fashion:

"As often happens in this world, there was a man and his wife. They had a son named Piarres who worried them greatly because he would not learn anything. The man was the Captain of a whaling boat. His journeys took him far, far out over the ocean, so that he was often from home for months at a stretch. Each time when he returned his first questions were: 'How is my son, Piarres? Does he learn much at school?' And each time his wife would give him the same answer.

" 'Not much,' she would say hopelessly. 'He does not learn much.'

"One autumn the Captain returned from an especially long voyage, and as he greeted his wife he said as usual, 'How is my son, Piarres? Does he learn much at school?'

"And as always, she replied, 'He does not learn much.'

"Now Piarres was growing into a tall sturdy youth and his father was worried because he was so stupid. He felt that the time had come when something must be done about it. So he went to the schoolmaster.

" 'What is the matter?' he asked. 'My son, Piarres, learns nothing here in your school.'

" 'No, he will not learn,' was the schoolmaster's reply. 'I cannot drive anything into his head.'

"Then the Captain called his son to him, and in a stern voice he said, 'Piarres, my son, I am greatly distressed by the reports I have of you. I am told that you have learned nothing. Can this be true?'

" 'No, my father, that is not quite true,' the boy replied. 'I may not have learned to write or to read, but I have learned better things. I have learned to understand the songs of the birds. You should see them fly to me in the forest when I call them. It is a fine thing indeed to talk with the birds.'

" 'Ah, my son, my son!' the Captain cried in disgust. 'To talk with the birds! To talk with the birds! What good can that do you? I myself will take you in hand and see that you learn something worth while. Make your bundle ready! On my next fishing trip you shall go along with me.'

"So when the boat set out again on its journey, Piarres was aboard. On and on they went over the waves, until at last they saw in the distance the dim line of a strange shore. A white bird flew above them. Finally it perched on the edge of the boat, singing, '*Wirit-tit-ti, kiri-kiri-ki.*' Hearing this, the Captain made haste to call Piarres.

" 'Now, Piarres, my son,' he said, 'instead of studying your books you have spent your time learning to talk with the birds. We shall see if you spoke truly. Tell me what this white bird says in its song.'

" '*Wirit-tit-ti, kiri-kiri-ki,*' the white bird sang at the top of its voice, as the boy stood and listened.

" 'Indeed, I understand the bird well, my father,' Piarres said. 'He declares that though I am now under your orders and must obey you, later on it shall be just the opposite. I shall be the master giving the orders and you shall be my servant.'

"At this, the Captain flew into a terrible rage. Taking a barrel, he knocked in its head and put his son into it. He then closed it again and threw it over the boat's rail into the sea.

" 'This is a just punishment for telling such lies, you ungrateful boy!' he shouted in his anger. 'May I never see your stupid face again!'

"In his tightly closed cask poor Piarres was tossed this way and that by the great waves. At last the tempest cast his barrel up onto the shore where, as it happened, the King rode abroad on a white horse.

" 'Break open the barrel that we may see what fine gift the ocean lays at our feet,' the King commanded his henchmen. As they began to knock in the side of the

cask they were astonished to hear a voice come from inside it.

" 'Gently, go gently,' said the voice. 'There is someone within here.'

"When the barrel was opened out fell poor Piarres, more dead than alive. The lad was in such a state that the King pitied him and had him taken to his palace to have his hurts cured. It was soon discovered that the lad had a magic gift of talking with the birds which told him of events before they came to pass. This talent pleased the King greatly. He treated Piarres as his very own son, and when he was grown old enough he gave him his favorite daughter for his wife.

"One afternoon, as the King and Piarres sat together, there were brought before them some fishermen whose boat had been wrecked on the shores of their kingdom. At once Piarres recognized his father among them, but he made no sign. As for the Captain, he had no idea that this fine young prince was really the son whom he thought he had drowned so long ago.

" 'You may take the Captain for your own servant,' the King said to Piarres. 'If he does not serve you well, he shall be thrown into prison.'

"The young man smiled to himself. He took the Captain into his service, but for a while he made no move

to disclose himself to him. At last, one day Piarres began to ask the Captain about himself and his family.

" 'Ah, my master, I am the unhappiest man in all the wide world,' said the Captain in answer to the young prince's questions. 'Misfortune follows my footsteps. My boat lies wrecked on the rocks of this shore. All my money is gone. But worst of all, my dear wife lately died of her grief at the loss of our son.'

" 'And what became of your son?' Piarres asked.

" 'Alas and alack!' the Captain cried with tears in his eyes. 'I threw him into the sea in a moment of anger. I have rued the day ever since, but he told such a lie that I was put into a terrible rage, and I did not know what I did.'

" 'What lie did your son tell?'

" 'He mocked me and said that one day he should be my master and I should be his servant.'

" 'But that was not a lie!' cried Piarres, who could not contain himself any longer. 'Father! My father! Do you not know me? It is I, Piarres. The bird's song has come true, for I am now your master and you are my servant.'

"Piarres had a soft heart. He forgave his father for his cruel treatment and they both lived happily together for the rest of their lives in the palace of the King."

X. THE STORY OF GOOD-FOR-NOTHING GANICHE

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It is a fine afternoon. Manesh is driving the cream-colored oxen down the road to the pasture, and his dog, Nagarro, runs and jumps by his side. But Manesh is far from happy. His lessons have not been going well lately at school, and he is so cross that he does not even know that the sun is shining above him in the blue sky or that birds are singing in the oak trees by the roadside. As he comes into the meadow where Amatchi is tending the goats and the sheep, the old woman looks keenly at his sulky face.

"Why, Manesh, my son!" she exclaims. "Whatever can it be that makes you look so black on such a bright day?"

"It's that school," the boy replies crossly, "and that teacher of mine! I wish I never had to go there again."

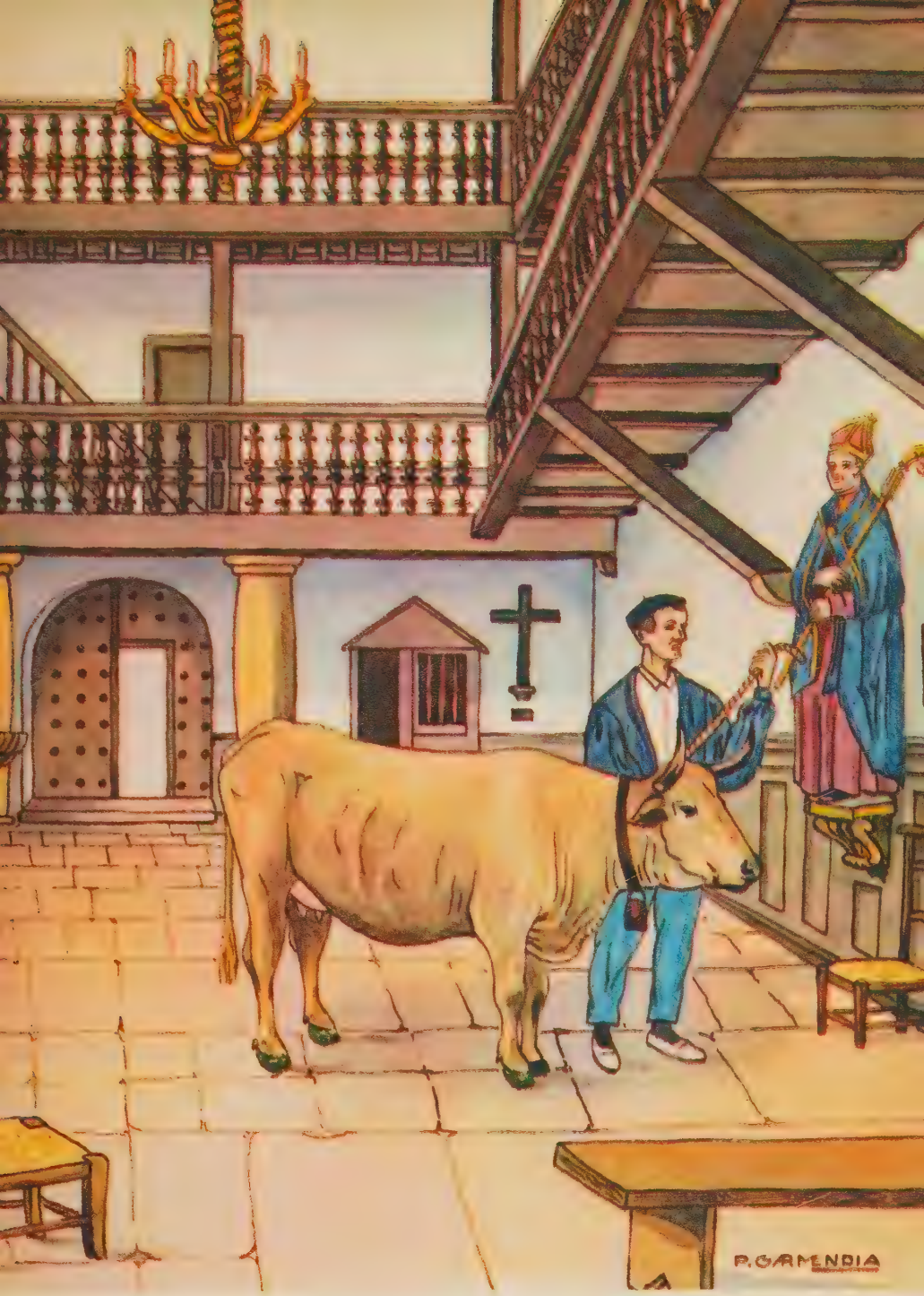
"No! No! You must not speak like that of your school," his grandmother chides gently. "Do you want to grow up to be a stupid like poor Good-for-nothing Ganiche?"

"Who was he, Amatchi?" A brighter look comes into Manesh's dark eyes as he scents a new story.

"Go and bring those two sheep back into the meadow and then you shall hear," is his grandmother's reply, as she points to two lambs that have strayed into the road. And when the boy and the dog return from their chase they sit down on the grass and the old woman tells Manesh the tale of Good-for-nothing Ganiche.

"As often happens in this world, there was once a mother. She lived with her son in a tiny cottage on the side of a mountain, and most of her fortune lay in her fine flock of sheep and her cream-colored cows. Her son's real name was Ganiche, but few people in the neighborhood ever remembered it. Everyone called him 'Good-for-nothing' because he was so foolish and stupid.

"One day his mother sent the young man out with their donkey into the forest to gather wood for their hearth fires. Choosing a big tree, Good-for-nothing Ganiche climbed out on a limb and began to cut it off close to the trunk. As he was chopping away along came a woodcutter. He took one look at the foolish boy and called out:



GOOD-FOR-NOTHING STEPPED INSIDE, LEADING HIS COW

" 'What are you thinking of, Stupid? When the branch falls you will fall too, if you sit like that.'

"But Good-for-nothing replied proudly that he knew what he was doing and that this was not the first limb that he had cut. Of course, he did indeed fall along with the branch. He straightway decided that the woodcutter must have been a magician to have known that it would happen just so. He jumped up from the ground and ran down the path after the man as fast as he could.

"Tugging at his jacket, he cried, 'Hey, man! Hey! You must be a magician. Come, tell me when I shall die.'

" 'When your donkey has tripped the third time,' the woodcutter said, thinking only to tease the poor foolish boy.

"Stupid Good-for-nothing went back to his work with a heavy heart in his breast. He did not want to die. He loaded his donkey up with firewood, saying over and over under his breath, 'When he has tripped the third time, then alas, I shall die.' As they started down the hill toward home the beast tripped on a loose stone. A short while thereafter he stumbled again, and the stupid lad cried out, 'Only one more trip now and alas, then I shall be dead.'

"At last the heavily-loaded little creature missed his footing and tripped for the third time. Whereupon, foolish Good-for-nothing Ganiche threw himself down on the

ground as if he were dead indeed, while his donkey trotted on home. Seeing the beast come back without his master, the poor woman wrung her hands and wept bitterly, crying that she was sure misfortune had befallen her son. Two men went to search for the youth, and when they found him lying in the path as if dead they lifted him gently onto a stretcher and started to carry him home to his mother.

"At the crossways they stopped to discuss which was the best road to take, when to their amazement the boy, whom they had thought dead, raised his head and spoke.

" 'When I was alive I always took the road to the right,' he said to them.

"The men were very angry to be so deceived. They threw down the stretcher and beat Ganiche with their staffs, saying, 'Well, you can take that road now by yourself.'

"When she heard of this the mother was sad, for she saw that her son grew more and more foolish. One market day she called him to her, saying, 'Ganiche, we must have money. We shall have to sell one of our cows. But I do not know what to do. I am busy to-day. I cannot go to the village market and I fear you are too stupid.'

" 'No, no, my mother!' begged Good-for-nothing Ganiche. 'Tell me how I should act and what price I must get and I am sure I can sell our cow to advantage.'

AS HE WAS CHOPPING, ALONG CAME A WOODCUTTER

"His mother set her price, and she warned her son to deal only with him who should speak little, and who should not try to flatter with soft, idle words.

Ganiche drove his cow to the market place. As he stood with the other farmers, a man walked up to him, saying, 'How much do you want for your cow, young man?'

" 'I want nothing from you,' was the Stupid's reply. 'You talk too much.'

"Another buyer came past and, stooping, he stroked the sides of the animal. 'Does she give good milk? What is your price?' he asked of Ganiche.

" 'She is not for you,' said the foolish youth. 'You use too many words.'

"He made the same reply to all who looked at his cow, and at nightfall he had not yet made the sale. As he was on his way home again, he passed the great church in the village square. Good-for-nothing stepped inside the door, leading his cow. There he saw a statue so lifelike that he took it to be a real man. He stood silent before it for several minutes. Then he said to the statue:

" 'Wouldn't you buy my cow? You are just the kind of a buyer my mother told me to seek; you do not talk too much. Here, take the cow! I will come back and get the money at the end of eight days.'

"He tied the cow's halter to the foot of the statue

and went along home where his mother greeted him, crying, 'Ah, my son, and did you do as I told you?'

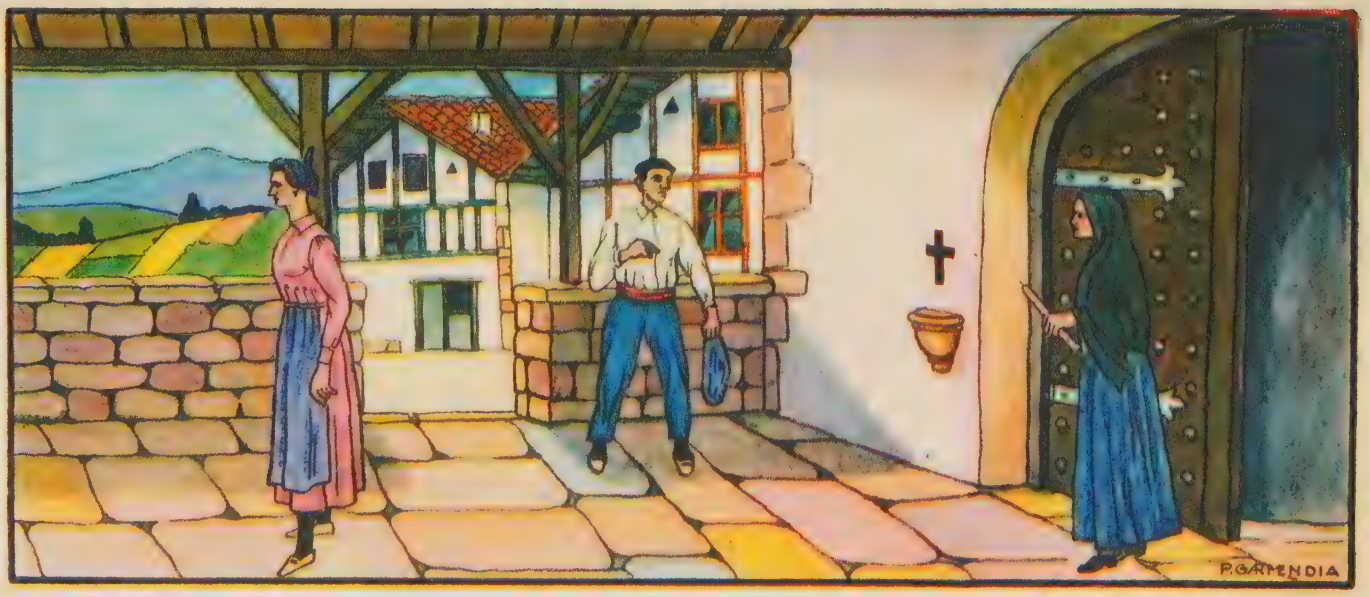
"Oh, yes, Mother,' he answered. 'Yes, indeed and I did.'

" 'Where is the money?' asked the poor woman, holding out her hand.

" 'Oh, I told him I would return for that in eight days. Our buyer was the master of the great stone house that stands alone there in the village square. Indeed he was a good merchant. He did not say even one single word to me, and so I tied our cow to his foot.'

"The poor mother soon discovered what Ganiche had done. She said to herself that he was more stupid than ever, and that he was indeed good-for-nothing. She decided that perhaps he might become wiser if she could find him a good wife. She was sure he would never know how to go about choosing a bride for himself, so she told him to stand beside the church door and cast sheep's eyes at the girls as they came out from mass. Now everyone knows that to cast sheep's eyes at a girl is to look at her with the soft side-long glance of a sheep. But stupid Good-for-nothing did not stop to think what his mother really meant.

"Early the next Sunday morning he went out to the flock. He killed all the sheep and took out their eyes. Placing himself by the door of the church, he threw an eye at



HE PLACED HIMSELF BY THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH

each girl as she came out on the porch. When he returned to his home his mother said to him:

" 'Well, did you find a maid to please you, my son?'

" 'Yes, yes, Mother,' he cried. 'There were many. Even after I finished throwing the eyes there came some beautiful maidens out of the church.'

" 'Finished throwing the eyes? What do you mean?' she cried, sick at heart.

" 'Why,' replied Good-for-nothing, 'did you not tell me to cast sheep's eyes at the girls? I took the eyes out of all of our sheep and threw them just as you bade me.'

" 'Woe is me! Woe is me!' the poor woman moaned to herself. 'What shall I live on now my sheep are all gone? Instead of finding my son a help in my old age, I should be far better off if he were dead.'

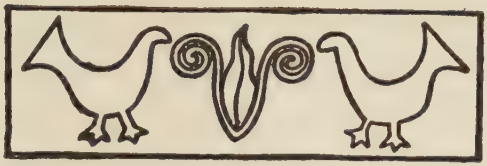
"Poor stupid Good-for-nothing felt sorry to think that he had killed their sheep all for nothing. He decided he would go far away, not to return until he had found somewhere another flock to replace them. With his bundle on his back he wandered hither and yon over the land. At last one day as he was walking along a road near the seashore he met a man driving a number of fat white lambs. He stopped him and asked him where he had found so many fine sheep. The shepherd thought that Ganiche must surely be speaking in jest, so he replied laughing:

" 'These lambs came from the bottom of the ocean.

Look out there at those waves with the bits of white on their tops. You can see for yourself how many sheep there are in the sea.'

"Good-for-nothing Ganiche believed the words of the joking shepherd. He waded out, out into the water, and at last disappeared under the white-capped waves. For all I know, he is still stupidly wandering about on the bed of the ocean looking for sheep."

XI. THE MAN WITHOUT A SHADOW



XI. THE MAN WITHOUT A SHADOW

"SHUT the windows, Mayi! Fasten the door tight, Manesh! A tempest is coming and we must be ready."

The old grandmother hurries about after the children to be sure there are no open cracks through which the rising wind might creep into the snug kitchen. Great black clouds are gathering in the sky overhead. The animals have been brought into their shelters, and soon all is in readiness for one of the sudden rainstorms that come up so quickly in this land of the Basques.

"Just look at those clouds!" cries Mayi.

"It is almost as black as the night," says Manesh, as he peers out of the window.

"Yes, the sun is quite gone," their old grandmother says as she lights the electric bulbs overhead. "It was

lucky for Axular that he did not have to leave the cave of Basa-Juan in weather like this."

"Who was Axular, Amatchi?" Mayi cries curiously.

"And what was he doing in the cave of Basa-Juan?" Manesh asks as the first great drops of rain begin to beat on the glass panes of the windows. And as the wind blows almost hard enough to lift the roof from the rafters, the old woman tells the children the story of Axular, the man who went all through his life without a shadow.

"As happens often in this world, there were once three brothers. They lived long, long ago when these little hills of ours were filled with ogres and fairies and Basa-Juans, those wild men whose left footprints always made holes in the ground like the hoof of a goat. These three brothers were clever, but the cleverest of all was Axular, the youngest.

"One day Axular returned to his home in the greatest excitement. Calling his brothers to him, he said, 'I am going away. I shall not return for a year and a day.'

" 'Where are you going?' his brothers asked eagerly. They were jealous of the quicker wits of Axular and they feared that this might be some wonderful journey which they would not want to miss.

" 'It would perhaps not be of interest to you,' was their youngest brother's reply.

" 'Indeed, indeed it would,' they cried, growing more

and more eager. 'Pray, tell us where you are going and perhaps we will go with you.' And they pressed him so hard that at last the young man gave in.

" 'I have heard,' he explained, 'that in the great cave on the side of yonder mountain there lives a wild Basa-Juan. The glade in front of his den has long been the meeting place of fairies and witches, and thus Basa-Juan had learned all their secrets. I am going to ask him to teach me their magic, for I am sure that to know it would be worth far more to me than much gold or silver.'

"For a moment the two older brothers said nothing. They were astounded at the daring plan that had just been unfolded and they were a little afraid of the wild Basa-Juan. But they did not relish the idea that their youngest brother should be the only one to learn the magic secrets of the fairies and witches. So, thinking to themselves that after all they would be three against one, they decided to join him in his adventure.

"The next morning they put their blue berets on their heads and threw their coats over their shoulders; and taking their *makilas* down from their hooks on the wall of the kitchen, they set forth for the home of the wild Basa-Juan. They went far, far, far. And at last they arrived at the mouth of his cave. They called to the wild ogre to come forth and talk with them.

" 'We have come, O Basa-Juan,' the youngest brother

began boldly, 'to ask you to teach us the secrets of the magic of the fairies and the witches that dwell in these hills.'

"Hearing this, the Basa-Juan flew into a rage. He stamped and he stormed, and he made such a noise that the rocks echoed like thunder. But with soft, flattering words, Axular soon calmed his ravings; and at last the Basa-Juan said:

" 'Well, I will teach you, but you must dwell here with me in my cave for a year and a day.'

" 'And the price?' asked the oldest brother. 'What shall we have to pay as the price of your teaching?'

" 'Ha, true, we must indeed set a price,' cried the wild man, licking his lips at the thought. 'I have it! For my payment I will take as my slave the one of you that is last to depart from my cave when our year and a day have come to an end. Do you agree?'

" 'It is as you say. I agree,' cried the youngest of the three brothers.

" 'As you say! We agree,' said the two other brothers a little more slowly.

"The very next day their lessons began. For a year and a day they sat at the feet of the wild Basa-Juan, learning from him how to fly through the air, how to creep through a keyhole, and how to weave charms against the spells of wicked fairies or witches. They learned the pass-

words to the fairy palaces that exist down under the rivers, and the magic that lies in a wand made from a branch of the dogwood tree. At the end of the time set they found that they had indeed learned all the secrets which the Basa-Juan had picked up from the meetings of the witches and fairies in front of his cave.

"The night before their departure not one of these brothers closed his eyes in sleep. All were thinking of the terrible moment when they should leave the cave and when the last one of all should be made the slave of the wild Basa-Juan. Axular could hear his brothers whispering together, and he easily guessed that they were plotting that he should be the last one to leave. As for him, he said nothing, but he too made his plans. Over and over he sent up the same prayer to the good God above. This prayer was quite simple. He asked only that the next day might be fair with the sun shining bright in the heavens.

" 'Get up, lazy bones!' the Basa-Juan cried early next morning. 'See, how the sun shines in through my cave's doorway! The time has come for you to leave. But remember, he who goes forth last is to be my slave forever.'

"At once, without a word, the three brothers started for the open door of the cave through which the sun was shining so brightly. The two elder brothers reached the opening first and passed through in safety, leaving their

youngest brother behind them, the last one to depart. With outstretched arms the Basa-Juan came toward him.

" 'You belong to me,' he roared. 'You are my payment, for you are the last one of all to depart.'

" 'Not I,' said Axular, as if in surprise. 'There is still another behind me.' And he pointed to his black shadow which, on the rocky side of the cave, looked for all the world like a young man.

"Now the Basa-Juans are learned in the lore of the fairies, but in day-to-day matters their minds work more slowly than those of clever humans like Axular. When the Basa-Juan saw the black figure he turned to grab it with his long fingers. By the time he had found out that he held only a shadow Axular had made his way safely out of the cave.

"But from that day until the hour of his death Axular was known as the Man Without a Shadow. For no matter how bright the sun might shine, no dancing black shape followed his footsteps."

XII. WISE PELE AND HIS FOOLISH FRIEND

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"It's here, Manesh," Mayi cries excitedly to her brother as he drives their four fine cream-colored oxen into the door-yard. "The package from our Uncle Louish in America! Hurry and put the oxen into the stable, so that we may open it."

Mayi has just returned from a trip to the post-office in the village of Azcar, where she went with her grand-mother to get the package she now holds in her hand. It has come over the seas from her uncle, who for several years has been tending sheep in America. But America, to Manesh and Mayi, does not mean the America of the United States and Canada. Many of their people cross the Atlantic Ocean every year to seek their fortunes, but

they go mostly to South America, and it is this country from which the package in her hand has been sent.

"Come, Amatchi, sit here at the table while we open our gift," Manesh calls to his grandmother, who shares in the pleasures as well as the pains of her two beloved grandchildren. Their eyes shine with excitement as the string is unfastened and the box opens to disclose a curious South American Indian doll for Mayi and a queerly shaped knife for Manesh. The children are delighted with their gifts. They lay them carefully on the shelf of the huge sideboard to show to their mother and father when they shall come in. Then, hardly thinking what she is doing, Mayi gathers up the paper wrapping from the package and the long cord which tied it. She is about to throw them on to the fire that is blazing away on the hearth.

"Child, child!" her grandmother calls sharply. "What are you doing? Do not throw away that good paper and cord. What shall we do when we wish to send off a package ourselves? You will be running hither and yon, hunting for a firm piece of string and a bit of paper no better than that! You are almost as careless as that Foolish Friend of Wise Old Pélé. Have I never told you the story of Old Pélé and the lesson he taught to this Foolish Friend of his as they walked on the highroad?" And seeing the little girl shake her head, the old woman begins:

"Well, it will do you good to hear it, and perhaps next

time you will remember not to throw away things that may well be used. Old Pélé lived in our village when I was a child. We thought him the wisest man in the whole world, and perhaps he really was. One summer day Pélé was walking along the highroad with a friend who was just as careless and foolish as Pélé was wise.

"It was hot. The sun burned high in the heavens and the two men had thrown their coats over their left shoulders that they might be as cool and comfortable as possible. As they walked slowly along Wise Old Pélé suddenly said to his friend:

" 'See! There's a horseshoe over there on your side of the road. Will you not pick it up?'

" 'Why do I want to bother myself with an old dirty horseshoe?' the Foolish Friend grumbled, kicking the bit of iron to the other side of the highway.

" 'Very well,' said Old Pélé, 'I will take it myself. One never knows when such things may be useful.'

"He stooped down and picked up the horseshoe and put it into his pocket.

"By and by the two travelers came to a village, where Wise Pélé stopped at an iron worker's shop. He there sold the old horseshoe for two shining pennies, with which he bought a small basket of juicy red cherries. After that the friends went on their way down the dusty highroad.

"The sun shone brighter and brighter The very air

seemed to scorch their faces, and the mouths of the two men became dry and parched. The Foolish Friend wiped his perspiring forehead with his handkerchief, saying:

" 'How terribly hot the day has become! My throat is as dry as the dust on this road. Oh, if we could but chance on a spring where we might moisten our tongues!'

"Old Pélé said nothing, but carelessly, as if he did not see what he was doing, he dropped a red cherry down on the ground at the feet of his friend. The Foolish Friend stooped quickly and, picking it up, he popped it into his mouth hastily, as though he were afraid that Pélé might see him.

"Farther along on the hot highway the same thing happened again. Pélé dropped another cherry, and his Foolish Friend stooped and picked it up greedily. Twice, thrice, five times, ten times, and even twenty times Pélé dropped a bit of fruit on the road, and each time his companion stooped down to get it.

"Finally, as the last cherry was eaten, the travelers sat down to rest in the shade of an oak tree. Smiling, Old Pélé then said to his friend:

" 'You are quite worn out with your stooping and stopping. If you had bent down only once to pick up the horseshoe you would not have had to bend down a full twenty times to get the cherries I dropped. You could

have sold the horseshoe as I did, and have eaten your fruit in peace from the basket!'

"And it is always thus, Mayi, my child! No sooner have we left behind something useful than we find ourselves sorely in need of it. The next time you are tempted to be wasteful and careless remember this tale of Pélé's Foolish Friend and the basket of cherries."

XIII. THE OLD SOLDIER AND HIS MAGIC SACK

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"I WISH I were as rich as Uncle Louish," Manesh says enviously as he talks with his grandmother and his sister, Mayi, of their generous relative over the seas.

"Alas, my son," Amatchi replies smiling, "rich as Uncle Louish you are not likely to be unless some day you should fare forth over the ocean to seek your fortune as he did in the New World. You will never grow rich here. Our country is too poor after the Great War. Now if you but lived back in the days when fairies walked abroad over our land, perhaps you might find a magic sack like that of the Old Soldier who begged at the crossroads."

"Did the magic sack make him rich?" Manesh asks eagerly.

"And did a fairy give it him?" Mayi cries, her eyes shining with wonder.

"Wait! Wait a bit! We cannot sit here talking idly, for there is much work to be done. Come! Help me shell this corn for the mill and I will tell you the tale of the Old Soldier and his magic sack.

"Long, long ago, when witches and Tartaros lived in the mountains and when one was apt to meet a good fairy at any turn in the highway, there was an Old Soldier who sat daily beneath the wayside cross at the meeting of the roads near a certain small village. The Old Soldier had been wounded in the wars, and his right arm lay in a sling. He held out his begging bowl in his left hand.

"One day, as the Old Soldier sat begging as usual, two travelers walked past him.

" 'Alms! Alms! I beg you, good masters,' the Old Soldier called out. 'Spare but a few coins to help a hungry Old Soldier.' Upon hearing his cry the travelers turned back.

" 'Ah, poor fellow, we will help you,' the First Traveler said. 'You shall make your choice. Will you choose a seat in Paradise when you are dead, or will you take now this magic sack that will fill all your needs?'

" 'Choose Paradise! Choose Paradise!' the Second Traveler whispered, bending down to the beggar.

" 'That is easy for you to say,' the Old Soldier cried. 'You who have all you need. If I and my family did not

have to eat, I too should choose Paradise. But as it is, sir, I pray you to give me instead the magic sack.'

"The First Traveler handed the Soldier a curious bag, saying as he did so, 'When you are in need you have but to say to the sack, "I need such a thing, Trente-ku-tchilo," and lo, in the sack you will find just what you have asked for.'

" 'Thanks! Thanks! A thousand thanks!' the Old Soldier cried, and he kept on calling down blessings upon the Traveler's head until he had gone out of sight around the turn in the road. The Old Soldier then rose from his place beneath the wayside cross to go to his home and tell his wife of his good fortune. Just then, however, there came rattling past the cart of the Village Baker. The smell of its hot bread reminded the Old Soldier that he was hungry.

" 'Ah, Monsieur Baker, give me a bit of your bread. My stomach is empty,' he cried to the Baker.

" 'What do you think of me?' the Baker replied crossly. 'Is it for you that I work day in and day out? You shall not have a crumb unless you can pay! Go along on your way!'

" 'So!' cried the Old Soldier. 'Is that a sample of your charity? Hey, Sack! I need bread, Trente-ku-tchilo!' And to the surprise of the Baker, from inside his sack the Old Soldier took out a fine loaf of bread.

"Later on, as the Old Soldier walked down the road munching his bread, he met a Tax Collector riding along on his donkey. Seeing the fat sacks of gold thrown across the back of the beast, the beggar said to its rider:

" 'You have so much money, give me but a few sous to buy clothes for my children.'

" 'A few sous indeed!' the Tax Collector cried angrily. 'What do you think of me? Is it for you I go about from dawn until dark collecting this money? Go along on your way!'

" 'So!' cried the Old Soldier. 'That is a fair sample of your kindly charity. But there are others more generous. Hey, Sack! I need money, Trente-ku-tchilo!' And to the surprise of the Tax Collector the beggar's sack was at once filled to the top with clinking gold coins.

"The Old Soldier went happily on home to show his new wealth to his wife and children, and they all cried with joy at the thought that they should never more need to be hungry or cold.

"One day, however, the Soldier came home to find his wife weeping bitterly.

" 'How is this? How is this?' he asked of her anxiously. 'We have all that money can buy, yet are you not happy?'

" 'Ah, my husband,' said the woman, 'every time you go out there comes to my kitchen a terrible ogre who will,

I am sure, some day do me great harm. I am so afraid that I cannot help weeping.'

"The next day the Old Soldier pretended to go out to the village as always, but he returned by a secret path and hid himself behind the door of the kitchen. When the ogre arrived the man called out in a loud voice:

" 'Hey, Sack, I need this ogre. Trente-ku-tchilo!' And at once the sack stretched itself to the size of a huge man, and in it, head first, the ogre was thrust. In this way the Old Soldier had no trouble at all in killing the creature. And after that he and his wife lived happily and in peace.

"But there was one thing that troubled the soul of the Old Soldier even in the midst of all his great happiness. He often thought back to the choice he had made, and he wondered what would happen to him when the time should come when he must go to the Other World. He made his wife promise that she would tie his magic sack round his wrist and that it should be placed with him in his coffin.

"At last one fine day, as it will happen to each of us, death came to get the Old Soldier. As he had wished, he set out for the Other World with the magic sack tied tightly round his wrist. He went far, far, far, until at last he came to the very gate of Paradise.

"Our Old Soldier knocked loudly and long. Finally the

great gate swung slowly open just far enough to allow the Gatekeeper to stick out his head. To his dismay, the Old Soldier saw at once that this was the Second Traveler who on that fateful day at the crossroads had advised him to choose Paradise instead of the magic sack.

" 'Why do you come here?' the Gatekeeper cried. 'You made your choice long ago. Go away at once!'

"And he was just about to shut the gate with a bang when the Old Soldier cried out, 'Hey, Sack. I need this Gatekeeper. Trente-ku-tchilo!' And in a trice the Gatekeeper was plunged head-foremost into the sack, his heels kicking wildly as he struggled to get out.

" 'Let me out! Let me out, Old Soldier,' he begged.

" 'That I shall not until you have promised to open wide for me the gates of Paradise.'

"The Gatekeeper struggled and struggled, but he soon saw there was no other way to free himself from his painful position. So at last he consented, and the Old Soldier was allowed to pass through the gateway to Paradise. We shall probably see him sitting there just at the right of the gate when we arrive."

XIV. THE HUNTING NEST OF OLD ECHTEBE

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"The ring doves are passing," Manesh's father says as he rises from his seat on the fireside bench to take down his long-barreled gun from its rack over the chimney piece. "All afternoon I have been at work in the forest trimming the trees and making ready our look-out for our hunting to-morrow. Let us hope that the skies may be well hidden by clouds."

"But Father, why do you want the day to be cloudy?" Mayi asks. "I should think you could spy out the birds best in the bright sunlight."

"Yes, it would seem so," is the reply, "but you see, we believe that the birds find their way south by the stars in the heavens, which they follow by day as well as by night. If the skies are well covered with mist the stars too are hidden and the birds, losing their guides, are more

apt to fly into the trees where we hunters await them."

"No one was hurt to-day, my son?" his old mother asks. "It is dangerous business working in the tops of those tall forest trees."

"No, all went well," Manesh's father replies. "Not once did I fall, although at one point I slipped and my foot was caught for a moment in the crotch of the branches, just like old Echtebé in the story you used to tell me when I was a lad like Manesh."

"You children have never heard of the tale of the hunting nest of old Echtebé," Amatchi says to Manesh and his sister. "While your father is oiling and cleaning his gun I will tell it to you as I told it to him on the eve of his very first going out with the dove hunters. What a hunter old Echtebé must have been in his youth! His like was not known in all the countryside round about and the count of his birds usually doubled that of his friends who hunted beside him.

"Each year, as the hunting season draws near, we see our men folk go out to work in the forests that lie in the path of the wild birds. They build their hidden look-outs in the sheltering branches of the tallest tree they can find, and they trim away the leaves and the twigs of the other trees so that there may be nothing to shut off the view of the keen-eyed watchers who must spy out the doves while they are yet far down the valley. What hard

work it is! Here the branches are too long! There they are too high, or too thick! Up and down, first into this tree and then into that, the hunters must climb again and again.

"Now when Echtebé was about thirty years old he had already the name of being the best shot in all the Basque country, and he had brought down with his gun hundreds of wild ring doves. He was more agile and bold than any of the other hunters. Echtebé did not take time to climb up and down the tree trunks when he was doing his trimming. With a swing of his long rope he would lasso a branch, would catch hold of it with his strong hands and swing himself into the neighboring tree as easily as a monkey goes from one limb to another. He worked among the tree tops as calmly as your father plows in his hay fields.

"At the close of one day during the ring-dove hunt, when Echtebé's gun had brought down even more birds than usual, he stayed alone in the forest after the other hunters had gone back to the village. A great many birds had lighted in a certain oak tree where there were some branches which he thought should be cut away before the hunt began again the next morning. From his place in a neighboring tree he threw his rope lasso over one of its long limbs. Pulling the branch to him, he seized it with his two hands, intending to swing back with it into the

oak tree. But as the branch carried him upward his arms were jerked almost out of their sockets. For one of his feet was held fast in the fork of the branches upon which he had been standing.

" 'What shall I do?' he thought, and a chill feeling of terror ran down his back. 'I am caught in a trap. I cannot let go this branch for the shock would loosen my foot and I should be crushed if I fell to the earth there so far below me. But neither can I hold on here forever. Even now my arms feel as though they were being torn out by the roots. I am lost indeed if no one comes to help me.'

"As he lay there in torture, stretched between the two trees, the tugging branch seemed to say him, 'I will not let you go. I will tear you away from your foothold and take you along with me. Just a few moments more and I am going back to my former position. You cannot hold me.'

"Echtebé began to feel his strength going from him. Once the branch almost slipped from between his aching hands, but he took a new hold and gritted his teeth in his desperate fight to save his life. Night had fallen. The forest was still. No one would pass that way before dawn, so at last he gave himself up for lost.

"Then suddenly in the darkness there came a rushing of wings, and Echtebé felt his face and his arms brushed by the soft feathers of hundreds of birds.

" 'We are the ring doves you have killed in the past,' shrill voices told him. 'We have come now to punish you for the grief you have caused us.' And they flapped their wings in his face and beat about his eyes and his aching head.

" 'Have pity! Oh, have pity!' cried poor Echtebé. 'I am at the end of my strength. I can hold on no longer.'

"Now the ring doves are really kind, gentle creatures with hearts as soft as their feathers, and they relented as they listened to Echtebé's plea for mercy.

" 'You have not had pity on us, O cruel Echtebé,' they replied, 'yet will we save you in spite of the wicked war you have waged against us. But only on the condition that you never hunt us again and that you swear before the saint that protects all winged creatures that you have shot your last shot in the hunts for ring doves.'

" 'Save me! Save me! I swear it,' he cried wildly as one of his hands lost its hold on the tugging branch.

"At his words, the limb that was tearing his arm from his body slowly grew less taut. The vast flock of birds had all lighted upon it and with their weight they made it bend down toward the hunter. Easing his arms and steadying himself, Echtebé was at last able to get his foot out of the crotch where it had been so tightly imprisoned. Aching and limping, he made his painful way home.

"The other hunters of the village could not under-

stand why from then until the very day of his death Echtebé never hunted again. For several autumns he did not go out to the forest but watched the ring doves sadly as they passed over the fields on their way to the south. At last his homesickness for the tree tops and his old hunting nest became too strong to resist. He climbed again to his post at the top of the great oak. He thought he might act as a look-out for the other hunters or perhaps help with calling the birds into the traps.

"But as he climbed up past the crotch where his foot had been caught he thought of the terrible night when the birds had released him. He knew he could never in any way go back on his bargain with them. So he contented himself with sitting high in his hunting nest, spying out the first of the doves as they crossed the horizon. As in the past, he would call them to the trees, but he would only speak to them gently and would let them go on their way free and unharmed. So passed the hunting seasons for old Echtebé, who told me this story just before he himself flew away into the Other World."

XV. THE SEA CAPTAIN AND THE SERPENT

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"THERE goes a spider! Kill it, Manesh!" Mayi calls out to her brother as she draws her feet up on the *züzülü,* the long bench beside the fireplace where she is sitting.

Manesh jumps up from his stool but his grandmother stops him, saying, "Softly, softly, my child! Do not kill the creature! Let him alone and he will go into his hole. God gave him his life, let him live then, as said Mahistruba, the Sea Captain, when he met the Serpent. And who knows but that some day you may be rewarded as he was."

"What did the Serpent give to Mahistruba?" Manesh cries eagerly, speedily forgetting all about the poor spider at the thought of another of Amatchi's tales.

"It is a long, long story," the old woman begins, "that

was told me by Gachina, the net maker, when I was about as big as our little Mayi here. It seems that there was once a sea captain named Mahistruba. He had lost his ship and he had become so poor that he was forced to live on the earnings of his wife and his daughter who went about sewing. Mahistruba longed to go to sea again, but he had no money with which to buy a ship. He used to stand on the shore and look sadly out over the waves, thinking of the times when he had sailed upon them. Every day as he walked there on the sands he met a serpent. And every day he passed the Serpent by, saying, 'God has given thy life to thee. Live then, O Serpent.'

"One day he was surprised to hear the Serpent speak to him.

" 'You have been good to me, Mahistruba. I will reward you,' it said. 'Go to the ship builders and order a fine ship. Pay them double their price that they may make haste with its building. Then find twelve strong sailors and give them twice the wages they ask.'

"When the ship was finished the Serpent gave the Sea Captain money to pay for it. It ordered him to have a huge chest placed in the hold, and the night before they set sail, under the cover of darkness, the Sea Captain took the Serpent with him to the ship and hid it away inside the chest. Every day during the voyage he went down to feed and talk with the Serpent. But he went always in

secret for fear that the sailors might discover the Serpent and perhaps cut off its head.

"One day the Serpent said to Mahistruba, 'To-morrow at sunset a frightful storm will come up. Earth and sky will mingle together and we shall be in great danger. In the midst of the tempest a huge black bird will fly over our vessel. Go, seek out the best marksmen among our sailors, for that bird must be killed or we shall all perish.'

" 'Who of you can shoot straightest?' the Captain asked of his men.

" 'I can kill a swallow in its flight,' was the boast of one of the sailors, and the Captain said to him, 'All the better! All the better! That will be of use to us.'

"As the Serpent had said, there came up a great tempest when the earth and the sky mingled together. All became black as night. The Serpent gave the Captain a magic drink for the hunter and they tied him high up on the mast. At midnight a piercing shriek rang out above the roar of the storm, and in the light of the flashing lightning they saw that the huge black bird was passing. Luckily the hunter shot straight. The bird fell into the sea. The waves became calm and the tempest ceased.

"When they had sailed on a little farther the Serpent said to the Sea Captain, 'Are we not near a port with hills running behind it?'

" 'Such a port is in sight,' Mahistruba replied.

" 'Very well, we shall stop there. Now ask the sailors if there is among them a swift runner, for we shall have great need of him.' And the Serpent told the Sea Captain just what he must do when the anchor was dropped.

" 'Who among you can run like the wind?' Mahistruba asked of the crew.

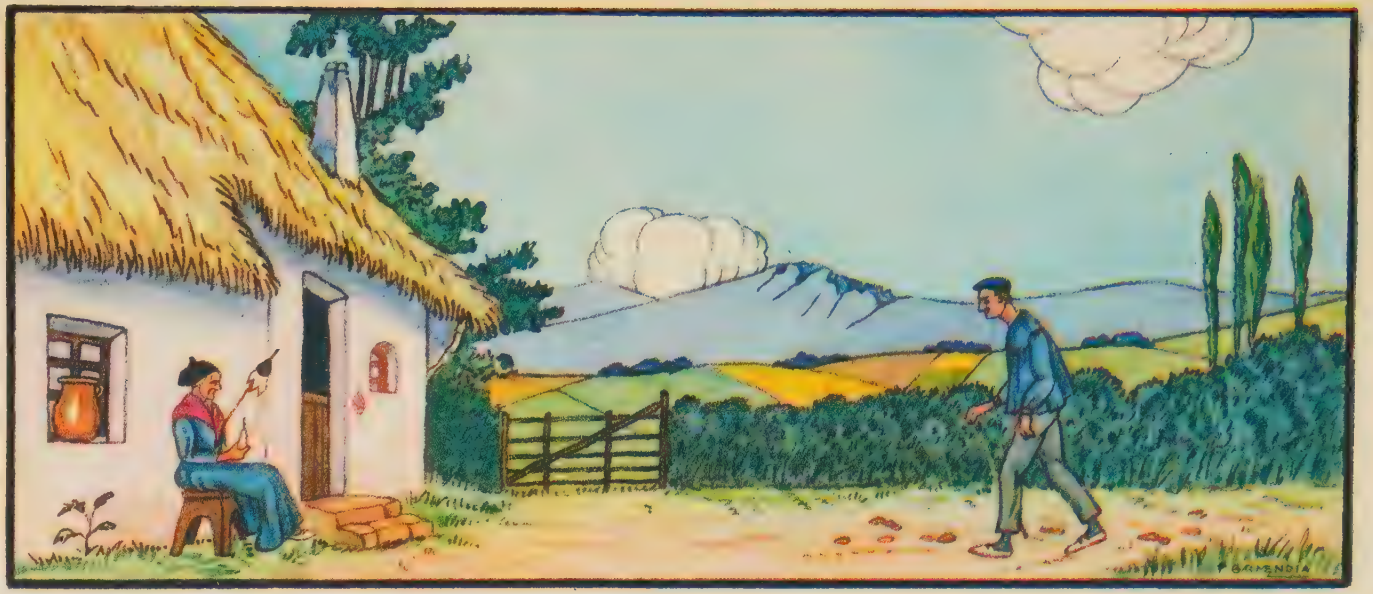
" 'I, sir. I can catch a hare as it flees,' one of them replied.

"All the better! All the better! That may be of use to us. On the side of yonder hill, high up behind the port, there is a little hut. In it there dwells an old, old woman, and on her chimney piece lie a steel, a flint, and a tinder box. One by one, you are to fetch those things here to our ship.'

"When the runner came to the hut on the hillside he found on the doorstep the old, old woman, as the Sea Captain had said. Her red beady eyes were bent on her spinning, and she did not look up.

" 'Ah, Mother,' he cried, 'I have walked a long way without finding water. Give me a drink.'

"At first she said No, but at last she relented. And while she was going to fetch him the water jar the runner snatched the steel from the chimney piece. Off he went at full speed, but the old, old woman followed him closely. As he jumped into the ship she tore off a bit of his coat and with it a piece of the skin of his back.



THE RUNNER FOUND THERE THE OLD, OLD WOMAN

" 'Our runner has returned to us with the steel,' the Captain said to the Serpent that night, 'but he has got the skin torn off his back, and he says that the witches may carry him off before he will go again to that old woman's hut.'

"But the Serpent gave the Sea Captain some salve that cured the runner's back and a magic drink that made him as brave as a lion. So when the next day dawned, the runner consented to go again to the hut of the old, old woman. Dressed in rags and tatters, he knocked at her door.

" 'Alas, I have been shipwrecked,' he said sadly. 'I have wandered hither and yon for more than two weeks, and I am now near my end. Give me, O Mother, a coal from your fire to light my pipe with.'

" 'No,' the old, old woman replied firmly. 'That I will not. Yesterday I was cheated. To-day I shall not be so foolish.' But the man finally persuaded her, and as she bent over the hearth he took the flint from the chimney piece and was out of the house in a flash. The old, old woman caught him just as he was jumping into the ship. She tore off his shirt, and the skin of his neck and back came off along with it.

" 'Never again will I go to see that red-eyed old witch,' the poor runner declared. But when his hurt had been healed by the magic salve of the Serpent, and when he had

drunk of the strengthening drink he set forth for the hut upon his third quest.

" 'Bread, a little bread, for the love of heaven,' he begged. 'I have not eaten for days. Have pity upon me.'

" 'Be off!' screamed the old, old woman. 'Every day enemies come here to torment me. No one shall set a foot in my house.'

" 'But what harm could a weak, starving man like me do you?' begged the runner. 'I promise to go away as soon as I've eaten.'

"At last she gave in and turned toward her cupboard. Then the man grabbed the tinder box and made off at great speed for the ship. The old, old woman overtook him just as he was leaping into the vessel. Taking hold of the skin of his neck, she tore it off down to the very soles of his feet. The runner fell to the deck more dead than alive, as he handed the Captain the precious tinder box.

"With a scream the old witch raised her hands to the sky and cried, 'I renounce him and all that live upon that ship.' And with that she vanished.

"The Serpent was pleased when the Captain told him that they had in their possession the steel, the flint, and the tinder box. He gave him more of the magic salve and the good drink so that the runner might be cured of his hurt. And he said:

" 'Now go up on deck. And when you have fired seven

rounds of the ship's cannon fire twelve rounds more! Soon there will come the police of the port, but be not afraid! When you are brought before the King ask that he visit your ship to see for himself that there is nothing here to cause you to be punished.'

"Hardly had the last roar of the cannon sounded across the hills behind the city when, as the Serpent had foretold, the Captain and his men were arrested and put into prison.

" 'Did you not know that cannon salutes are forbidden here?' the police asked him sternly. 'Had you not heard that our city still mourns the loss of our king's only son who has been gone these seven years?'

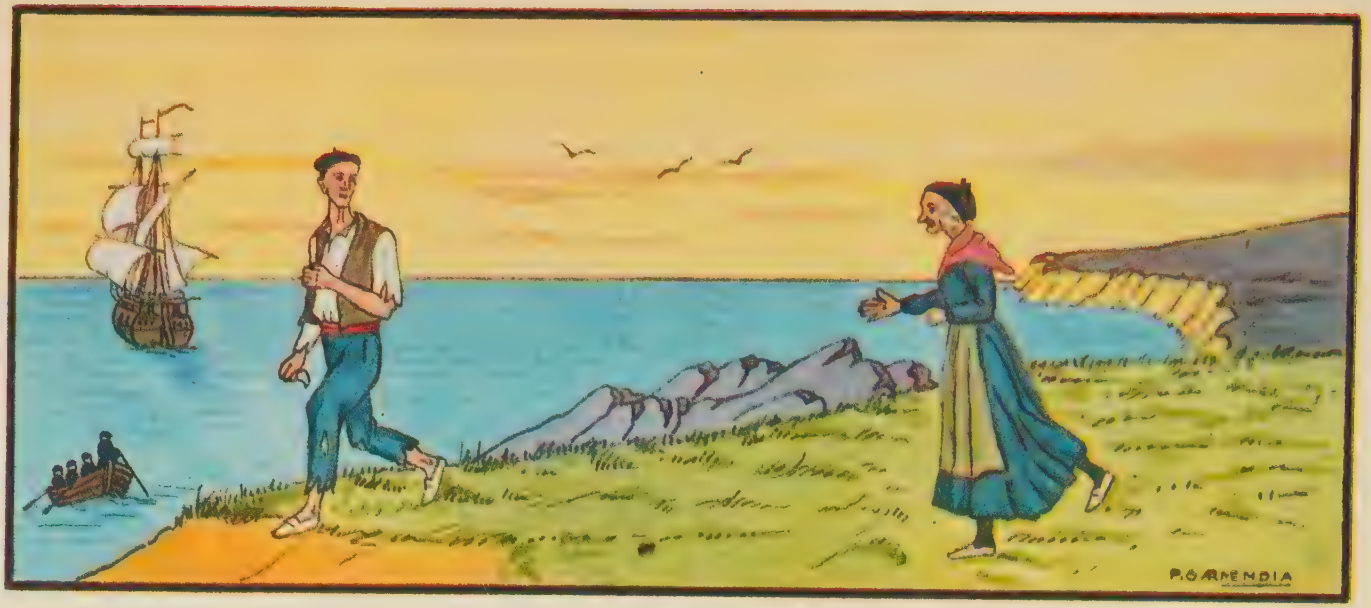
" 'I knew nothing of this,' said the Sea Captain. 'If I might but explain my case to the King I am sure he'd have mercy upon me.'

"The King, with his courtiers, his soldiers, and his judges, listened to the strange tale of the Sea Captain, and upon his request they all boarded the ship. As they entered the hold the lid of the huge chest slowly raised itself from within; and to the surprise of all, including Mahistruba, a handsome young prince stepped forth, crying, 'Father! My father!'

" 'My son!' said the King, with tears of joy running down over his cheeks, and with both arms outstretched, 'Can this be my son?'

" 'It is indeed I, my father,' said the young man. 'I was enchanted by that old witch who lives in that hut on the mountainside. For seven long years I had borne the form of a serpent. Then I met this good Sea Captain. He spared my life many times, saying, "God gave thy life to thee. Live then, O Serpent!" On his ship was I brought back to you. It is his sailor who killed the old witch's servant—a huge black bird that sought to wreck us in a tempest. It was his runner who brought to me the steel and the flint and the tinder box, thus breaking the spell that the witch had laid upon me. It is to him alone that you and I owe my safe return.'

"The King was so joyful that he ordered a great feast that lasted for a full seven days and a full seven nights. All in the kingdom made merry to the sound of gay music, while the loud salutes of the cannon shook the neighboring hills. The sailors were set free and their pockets were filled to overflowing with coins, while Mahistruba received for himself the great ship and so much gold, silver, and jewels that the huge chest in which the Serpent Prince had traveled would scarce hold them all."



HE WENT, BUT THE OLD, OLD WOMAN FOLLOWED HIM

XVI. THE BASQUE MAIDEN AND THE KING

XVI. THE BASQUE MAIDEN AND THE KING

"As HAPPENS often in this world, there was once a king," says Amatchi, beginning another of the old fairy tales that her grandchildren, Manesh and Mayi, like so well to hear. They are busy at work in the great kitchen, shelling corn which to-morrow Manesh and the patient donkey-of-all-work will take to the mill to be ground up into meal for their porridge and bread. Each one has a pan in his lap into which the tiny grains are dropping like rain. The patter of the kernels and the crackling of the fire on the hearth are the only sounds in the kitchen, save the old woman's voice as she spins her wonderful tale.

"This king was a good king who spent much of his time going about among his people, stopping at the farmhouses to talk of the crops and the harvests, and making his way unheralded into the towns to find out the needs of those who dwelt there. One day on the highroad just outside the city of Bayonne there stood talking a group of farmer folk. A tall man, clad in the beret, the blouse, and the cord-soled canvas shoes of the Basque, had had too much to drink and he was holding forth in a loud tone about the affairs of the kingdom.

" 'It is a shame,' he shouted, 'that our king does not tell us more of what goes on there in his palace where he takes his ease. Little does he care to know what we think.'

"As he spoke, there rolled slowly past a great coach which suddenly came to a standstill. To the speaker's great horror, the door opened and he saw the King himself descend.

" 'You do not seem pleased with the way my kingdom is ruled,' the King said to him sternly. 'And I am not at all pleased with your manner of speaking. To-morrow you and I must come to a better understanding. Present yourself at the château where I rest for the night, and between now and then, in order that your troubled mind may have other things to dwell upon besides the affairs of the state, you may think out the answer to this riddle: What is it that is so light that there is nothing lighter? And what is

it that is so dark that there is nothing darker? And what is it that lies between the two? Think well, O Basque babbler, for upon your answer depends your fate.'

"The poor Basque felt as if all the donjons of the château had opened their mouths to swallow him up. Gripped by fear, he fled across the country to his little farmhouse upon the hillside.

" 'Gracianne, Gracianne,' he called to his daughter. 'I am in danger. Your wisdom has helped me many times in the past. Now again you alone will be able to save me.' And he poured the story of his misfortune into the ears of his daughter, who was known throughout the country for the quickness of her wits. As she heard the riddle of the King she laughed heartily, saying:

" 'Have no fear, my father, I will tell you the answer and all will be well. But should the King ask you who solved the riddle for you, be sure to say to him that it was I, your daughter, Gracianne.'

"The next day as the Basque stood before the King in the great hall of the château he gave him the answer as Gracianne had taught him.

" 'The riddle is easy, O King,' he said. 'There is nothing so light in all creation as heaven above, nothing so dark as the depths of hell beneath, and that which lies between them is surely the earth upon which we live.'

"The King was astonished at the reply of the Basque

and he straightway demanded who had solved the riddle for him.

" 'It was my daughter, Gracianne,' the Basque replied truthfully, 'who is as good as she is beautiful. Though she is but twenty years old her wits are the quickest in all our land.'

" 'If she is truly like that, I wish to see her,' the King said to the Basque. 'Bring her before me. But she must come neither afoot nor on horseback; neither clothed nor unclothed; neither to-day nor to-morrow. Go now, and remember that the fate of the both of you depends on the way you carry out this order.'

"Gracianne blushed deeply when she heard this new riddle. She thought for a moment, and then a merry smile lighted her face.

" 'After all, this too is simple,' she said to her father. 'Go fetch me the black sheep out of our flock. He is quite strong enough to carry me to the château, and riding upon him I shall be neither afoot nor on horseback. As for my costume, I know now why heaven has given me such long, thick, black hair. It falls to my ankles, and if I let it down it will cover me completely. For the last condition, we should be hard put to it indeed if it were not for the fact that the repeating clocks in the château strike each hour twice. Often in the darkness I have heard the first twelve strokes of midnight, and as I waited for

the second sounding of the bells I have thought of how at that very instant one day is finished and another not yet begun. We must arrive at the château just between the two strikings.'

"So after nightfall, by the lonely paths through the forests, the Basque led his daughter riding on her black sheep to the dwelling of the King. At the very instant when the twelfth stroke of the first midnight striking sounded out through the darkness the hand of the fearless Basque maiden lifted the knocker of the great gate. She stood before the King clothed in her black hair just before the clock struck midnight for the second time.

"The King was so enchanted with the beauty and the wit of Gracianne that he decided he would make her his bride.

" 'Happy child, whose beauty indeed equals your wit,' said he. 'You shall become the Queen of this land. You shall dwell in my palace, and all shall be at your feet. But only so long as you do not interfere with the affairs of the kingdom. Should you ever contradict me or question my acts, you shall be sent away in disgrace.'

"The Basque maiden was married to the King with pomp and rejoicing. Her father came to live in a wing of the great palace, and many days, weeks, and months went by without the tiniest cloud darkening the bright sky of the Queen's happiness. But ere long she discovered that

her royal husband was often unfair in his decisions in the disputes of his subjects, and her love of justice made it hard for her not to put in a word of protest.

"One day as she rode by his side through the market place in a village not far from the palace, two quarreling men came toward the coach. 'Judge between us, O King,' one of them cried. 'Sire, give me justice, I am a seller of oxen and pigs. I was leading my sow and her ten little ones to the market when along came this peddler. He stole away my small pigs, and now he insists that they belong to him. Does he look like a seller of animals, he with his peddler's box on his back? See my sow here grieving her heart out for her lost babies! Behold my long stick which I used to keep the pigs in the road! Sire, you must know that I speak the truth and that the pigs are mine only.'

"But for some reason the appearance of the merchant pleased the King most and he said to the poor farmer, 'Go on then, I say the pigs belong to this peddler.'

"The Queen was not happy, for she felt that the King had not given justice. That evening she summoned the farmer to her.

" 'To-morrow at ten we go along the highroad to church,' she said to him. 'Place your fishing boat out in the meadow that lies on our way. Take your rod and your line and pretend to catch fish in the grass of the fields! When the King asks you what you are doing, tell him

that you are sure fish can live in the field grass if little pigs have for their mother the trunk of a peddler. Then, to avoid being thrown into prison, say to him that the Queen advised you to speak so.'

"All happened just as Gracianne had foreseen. But the King flew into a rage when he heard it was she who had planned the scene with the farmer.

" 'Go then, ungrateful Gracianne,' he said angrily. 'I am through with you who go so against me and my wishes. To-night before sunset you must be gone, never to return. But because of the happiness you and I have had together, I will permit you to take with you into your exile the thing that pleases you most here in the palace.'

"The people of the court wept when they heard that their beloved queen was to be sent away from them. But Gracianne comforted them, saying, 'Have faith in me! All will yet be well.'

"When the hour of her departure arrived she called to her the two most faithful of her servants and said to them:

" 'With his dinner I gave the King a strong sleeping powder, so that he is now in a deep slumber from which he will not soon awake. Carry him out and place him gently upon the seat of my coach. Have no fear! Good will come of it for all of us!'

"An hour or so later, as the coach bearing the Queen

was rolling along on the highroad, the jolting over the stones and the fresh air of the night awakened the King.

" 'Where am I?' he cried, rubbing his eyes. 'You? Gracianne? Have I not cast you off? What am I doing here at your side?'

" 'It is all too true that you cast me off,' said the Queen gently, 'but you said also that you would permit me to take with me the thing that pleased me most in the palace. It is you, my husband, who are the dearest thing to me in the whole world. That is why I am taking you with me.'

" 'Ah, my poor wife,' cried the King, bursting into tears. 'How stupid of me to try and send you away! How could I ever live without you? Let us go back to the palace, and I swear that you shall be my beloved queen always, no matter what you may do.' So the coach turned around, and the waiting people gave cheer upon cheer as it drove up again to the door of the palace and the King helped out his queen. Gracianne, the Basque maiden, remained on the throne until the day of her death, and she governed the kingdom of her husband both wisely and well."

XVII. FIFINE AND THE WHITE MARE

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"You guess! I guess!
As I know some little thing,
You know some little thing.
What is this?

"One jump here!
One jump there!
A little black lady?"

Amatchi recites this riddle as she sits with the children beside their blazing hearth one cold winter evening. Mayi and Manesh clap their hands gleefully as they both cry out together:

"We know. It's a flea!"

"Spoken truly," the old woman says, smiling. "And it

was a flea that started all the trouble in the story I am going to tell you now. As often happens in this world, there once was a king. He had three beautiful daughters of whom his favorite was Fifine, the youngest. One day the King felt something tickle his ear and he asked Fifine to look and see what it could be.

" 'It is a creature, my father, that looks like a flea,' she said. 'But it is five times as large as the biggest I ever saw.' Between her thumb and forefinger she held out a strange insect that did indeed look like a monster flea.

"The King was much interested. He put the creature into a small stone pot and set it down on the table before him. A little later he noticed that the top of the pot was bmobbing up and down. Lifting the lid, he found that his flea had grown to ten times its original size.

" 'Never in all the days of my kingdom has there been such a flea,' said the King. 'We shall have to put him into a barrel, he grows so fast.'

"But before a week was over the sides of the barrel began to crack with the struggles of the giant insect, which had now grown to be as large as a calf. At last the King grew frightened. Calling for four of the best butchers of his kingdom, he had the beast killed and its skin taken off. He placed the skin in a window of the palace, sending forth word throughout the realm that he who

should guess from what animal the skin came should choose one of the three princesses as his bride.

"Fifine and her two sisters were all young and beautiful, so suitors came from far and from near to try their hand at the guessing. But no one could tell to what kind of a creature this strange skin had belonged.

"Then one morning there appeared a young man dressed in a fine suit of gold, who straightway said to the King, 'Your Majesty, that is the skin of the flea that grew in the cask.'

"The King was delighted with this clever Gold Prince. He told him that he might choose as his bride the one of the princesses who pleased him the most, and the Gold Prince replied he would return in two days' time to make his choice. The King ordered a great feast in his honor. The palace was turned upside down with the preparations. Fifine was on her way to the wine shed to bring out bottles of rare wine to grace the banqueting table when, as she was passing the stables, she heard her name called. Turning back, she found that it was her favorite white mare that had spoken to her.

" 'Take care, Fifine,' said the White Mare, shaking her long mane. 'That Gold Prince is not a true prince at all, but a wicked, wicked fairy whom I know of old. It is you he will choose, and woe be to you if we cannot get rid of him. Heed what I say and do just as I tell you, and all

may yet be well. Your father will wish to give you much money as your marriage gift. Do not take it! Say to him you want nothing but the White Mare! And even should he be angry, you must refuse to leave the palace without me!'

"Fifine was frightened by the words of the White Mare. Her heart was filled with fear of the wicked fairy Prince. But although she put on her oldest clothes for the banquet and made herself as ugly as ever she could, she was the one of the three princesses whom the Gold Prince chose for his bride.

"All took place as the White Mare had foreseen. As soon as the wedding banquet was over the King wished to make Fifine a present of many bags of gold, and he grew very angry when she replied, 'No, my father, I will not take a penny. I want only the White Mare as my marriage gift.'

" 'But the White Mare you cannot have,' said the King. 'She was a present to me from your dear mother as she lay on her death bed. I will not let her go.'

" 'Then the Gold Prince departs without me. Unless I may ride away upon the White Mare I shall not leave this palace.'

"At last the King was forced to give in. The wicked Gold Prince then wished to tie the White Mare behind his own carriage, but, as Fifine had already been warned of this too, she refused, saying, 'My White Mare gallops

more swiftly than those black horses of yours. We shall go on in front and you may follow us.' And off they went, as fast as the lightning.

"When they had traveled a great distance the White Mare suddenly stopped short. With her right fore-foot she struck the earth three sharp blows, and it opened before her in a great chasm.

" 'Enter, thou wicked one,' she cried as the black horses of the evil Prince galloped by. 'Enter and remain for seven long years.' The wicked Prince and his carriage dashed into the hole and the earth closed upon them.

" 'My little Fifine,' said the White Mare, 'you will now have seven years of peace. But as it is not safe for so beautiful a young princess as yourself to go traveling about the world alone, I will give you the costume of a boy. You shall pass as a young prince in search of adventure.'

"So, dressed in her disguise, Fifine set out on her travels with her White Mare. Coming one day in sight of a great palace, the White Mare tossed her head and said to her princess:

" 'Here we shall stop for a while. In this palace there dwells a queen whose son is both kind and brave. He would make you a good husband. It is best, however, that we wait a little before we tell him you are not truly a prince.'

"Fifine and her White Mare had been guests at the palace for several weeks, when one morning the young

Prince of the house said to his mother, 'I had a dream last night in which it seemed that our guest was a beautiful princess instead of a prince.'

" 'Whatever gave you such an idea!' his mother exclaimed. 'That could not be so. But I know a way to make sure. Ask our guest to go with you to the fair. If he should indeed be a princess he will stop before the booths where they sell satins and silks and fine dresses and gems.'

"Now Fifine took care of her White Mare herself. As she was feeding her on this morning the animal whispered a warning, telling her of the plan of the Queen.

"That evening the young Prince came to his mother, shaking his head and saying, 'My dream must have been false, for when we went to the fair our guest did not even glance at the booths of satins and silks and fine dresses and gems. He walked straightway to those where they sold pistols and knives.'

"However, in his sleep that night the young man dreamed again that his guest was a beautiful princess, and again he sought out his mother.

" 'Take our guest to the apple orchard,' she said. 'It is now in full bloom, and if the blossoms fall upon him it is a sure sign that he is a girl.'

"Fifine, however, was warned as before, and the White Mare hid herself among the trees, blowing great breaths

from her nostrils so that the blossoms all fell down on the Prince. Not a one touched Fifine.

"The next day, however, the Queen tip-toed into Fifine's room when she was asleep. She found her dressed in a fine silken gown which she had put on for her afternoon's rest. Then at last she knew that her son's dreams were true, and that their guest was indeed a beautiful princess. Not long thereafter the Prince asked the Princess Fifine to become his bride.

" 'Now, my child,' said the White Mare to Fifine when, with great feasting, the wedding had taken place, 'you will need me no longer, and it is time for me to go to the Other World. But before we part let me put into your hands this magic flute. Never leave it behind you! Should you be in danger at any time, play softly upon it and I will come to your aid.' And the White Mare disappeared.

"Fifine and her prince lived happily for several years. Then one day, while her husband was away at the wars, she sat in the palace garden with their two children playing about her feet. Hearing a noise in the rosebushes behind her, she turned her head quickly. To her horror she beheld there the wicked Gold Prince, who was again free after the seven years in his earth's prison.

" 'Fifine, follow me!' he commanded her sternly. 'If you do not come quickly all three of you shall die instead of just one.' Fifine was frightened. She trembled as she gath-

ered her children into her arms. Suddenly she thought of her magic flute, which she always carried in the pocket of her gown.

" 'If I must, I must,' she said to the wicked Gold Prince, pretending to submit. 'But at least you will let me play a farewell song for my children upon my little flute.' The evil Prince suspected nothing and he gave his consent.

"With the first notes of the song the White Mare came galloping into the woods. Fire spurted from her nostrils. Her black eyes rolled in anger. With her right fore-foot she gave the earth three sharp blows, saying, 'You shall not have her, evil one that thou art. Earth, open up and receive forever this creature!' As she spoke there was heard a noise like the thunder. The earth yawned at the feet of the furious Prince, and he was never seen more.

" 'At last you are safe,' the White Mare cried, 'and with one more gift I will leave you forever.' She spoke some magic words, tapping a rock with her shining black hoof, and there sprang up before their very eyes a beautiful palace, with a fountain that spouted gold playing before it. The White Mare then changed herself into a dove and flew up, up into the clouds.

"In the meantime Fifine's own husband came galloping home through the woods near his castle. Suddenly his horse shied. There before him he saw a gallows with three ropes swinging in the breeze. A fear gripped his heart at

the dreadful sight, for he had a strange feeling that these ropes had been meant to hang Fifine and his children. You can picture to yourself his delight upon finding all three alive and well and upon hearing Fifine's wonderful tale of the Gold Prince and the White Mare."

XVIII. THE STUPID TARTARO

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"ONLY think, Amatchi," says Manesh to his grandmother as they watch the sheep in the meadow. "This summer I will be old enough to take our flocks to the mountains all by myself."

"Yes," the old woman replies. "At last you may be trusted to see that no harm shall come to the flocks, and then too you have learned to make very good cheese from the milk of our ewes. I feel sure your father will allow you to go when the warm days come again."

"What fun I shall have!" The boy's eyes sparkle as he thinks of his three months high up on the mountainside. There with the other lads of the village he will roam over the grassy slopes and the rocks all the day long. They will

sing songs and tell tales as they sit about the blazing fire in the evenings, and at night they will sleep in the little huts of the shepherds.

"And every time Mayi comes from home with my basket of ham and eggs and good corn bread I shall send back my very best cheese to the priest. I shall ask him to pray that my sheep may be kept safe and that we may not meet a Tartaro."

"Have no fear of Tartaros, my child," cries the old woman, smiling. "No one has met a Tartaro for these many years. I am sure they were all killed long, long ago."

"Did you ever see a Tartaro, Amatchi?" Mayi asks.

"No, never," is the reply. "But my grandmother used to tell me about them. The Tartaros were great giants. They were not always dangerous, for all they were so strong. You see, they were so stupid that when they tried to trick one of our people they usually got the worst of the bargain. In those olden days even a boy like Manesh here could best a Tartaro if he was clever. I remember one tale my grandmother told me about just such a boy. Sit here on the grass awhile and I will tell it to you.

"As happens often in this world, there was a woman and her son. They had nothing to eat, they were so poor. At last the lad decided to leave his home to seek his fortune. He went far, far, far, until he came to a great house where he asked if they did not need a boy. He made a

strange bargain with the Master of this house. They agreed he should work for the Master for a whole year at so much a month. But there was one condition. If either Master or servant should not be pleased with what the other one did he was to take all the other's possessions. Now, no sooner had this bargain been sealed than the Master repented of it. He tried his very best to make the Boy say he was not pleased so that he might get rid of him. But the Boy knew what the Master was about and he decided that he would play the same game.

" 'Go, Boy,' commanded the Master, 'and bring me back from the forest only wood that is twisted. If there should be a single straight stick among those you bring you shall be soundly beaten.' On the way to the forest the Boy passed the Master's fine old vineyard and, cutting down the rare vines, he brought their twisted trunks back to the great house. The Master said nothing, but he was not pleased.

" 'Now go to the field with these cows, but see that you open neither door nor gate in putting them in,' he commanded the Boy. When the Boy came to the closed gate he killed all the animals, cut them up, and threw the pieces into the fields.

"Going back to the Master, he said, 'Go, look if you will. The cows are all in the field.'

"The Master was angry when he saw what had hap-

pened. But he said nothing for he did not want to lose his possessions.

" 'The only way to get rid of this fellow,' he said to himself, 'is to send him to the mountains so that the Tartaro who dwells there may eat him up.'

"So the Master bought seven pigs and bade the Boy take them to the mountains to feed. He promised that the boy should have one for himself if he brought them back safe.

" 'But what shall I eat while I am there? Stones?' asked the Boy.

" 'Whatever you like,' the Master replied, and the Boy gathered up some nuts that were drying on the roof of the wine shed. He knew well that there was a Tartaro in the mountains, but he was not afraid. He went on, on, on, until he came to an empty shepherd's hut, which he took for his own. As he stood in the doorway he spied another hut near by, and he soon saw that it was there that the Tartaro dwelt.

"One day as he was tending the pigs he saw the Tartaro walking toward him. He quickly put one of the nuts between his teeth and cracked it with a loud noise just as the giant came up to him.

" 'What are you doing, Boy?' the Tartaro asked.

" 'I eat the bones of giants,' was the lad's reply as he crunched the nut loudly.

"The stupid ogre said to himself, 'Here must be a

strong lad indeed if he eats giants' bones. But even so, I am sure he cannot be as strong as I am.'

"'And I eat boys like you!' the Tartaro roared. 'We shall soon find out who is the strongest. To-morrow we shall have a test of our strength and we shall see who can throw a stone to the greatest height. If you should win I will not eat you just yet.'

"The Boy was afraid to refuse, lest he be devoured there on the spot. He felt very sad as he cooked his evening meal, for he knew well that the Tartaro could throw three times as far as he.

"As he sat there weeping a tiny old woman in a gray gown appeared at his side, and when he told her his tale of woe she comforted him, saying, 'If it is only that, it is nothing!' And she gave him a wee gray bird, telling him to throw that instead of a stone in the morrow's test.

"The next day the stone of the Tartaro went to a great height, but the gray object flung into the air by the lad never came down, and the stupid Tartaro did not know what to think.

"'You shall go free this time, but we must have another test,' he said with a snarl. 'I will wager that I can throw a bar of iron farther than you can. If you lose this time I shall surely eat you for supper.'

"The Boy's heart was heavy. He wept, for he knew that he was not strong enough to do more than raise a bar of

iron a foot off the ground. But, again, there appeared to him the same tiny old woman in her gray gown. On hearing of his bet, she said:

" 'If it is only that, it is nothing.' And again she told the Boy how to get the best of the stupid Tartaro.

"Next day, the giant lifted a huge iron bar and flung it far, far down the mountainside. Then it was the Boy's turn. As the old woman had directed, he raised one end of his bar only about a foot off the ground. But as he did so he cried loudly, 'Up and out, Bar! Out to Salamanca!'

"At that the Tartaro gave a great cry.

" 'Do not throw it!' he begged. 'You have won! You have won! My people live in Salamanca. If your iron bar should fall there they might be killed.'

"The Tartaro next took the lad to the nearest fountain and said they should see who could carry away the most water. When the giant had filled two great vats the Boy cried in scorn:

" 'What, only two vats? I can carry off the whole fountain!' And he began to stir the water about with a stick.

"But the Tartaro quickly stopped him, saying, 'Wait! Stop! You have won again. What should I drink if you took away all the water?' Then the Tartaro said, 'We shall have one last test as to who can carry the heaviest tree out of the forest. If you win this time you may go free forever.'

" 'This is the end,' thought the lad to himself. 'I can never find a way to lift any tree in that forest. I shall surely be eaten.' And he fell to weeping again.

"Straightway the tiny old woman in the gray gown appeared at his side and when she heard of this last wager she said as before, 'If it is only that, it is nothing.' And she showed him what to do.

"The next day the Tartaro began to pull a great oak tree out by its roots, while the Boy busied himself tying a string around all the other trees of the forest.

" 'What are you doing there?' the Tartaro cried.

" 'You carry but one tree, I shall carry all these,' said the Boy carelessly, as he went on with his work of tying the trees together.

" 'No! No! No! Stop! You have won!' The Tartaro cried. 'How shall my pigs live without roots to dig in?'

"He did not know what to think, but he made no more tests because he saw that the Boy was more clever than he.

"As his hut was near by, the pigs of the Tartaro mingled daily with those of the Boy. When at last the summer was over and it was time for him to go back to the valley their pigs were mixed up.

" 'What shall we do?' the Tartaro cried. 'My pigs are not marked. How can you tell which ones are yours?'

" 'Easily, easily!' said the clever Boy. 'Each of my pigs

has a small curly tail. That is my mark.' Of course, as everyone knows, all pigs' tails are curly, so it is not strange that when they looked at their pigs they found that every one had the Boy's mark upon it. The poor stupid Tartaro stood scratching his head in bewilderment as the Boy took away both droves of swine.

"The Boy and the pigs went down, down, down toward the valley. As they passed through a town they came to a market where the Boy sold all the pigs except one. But first he cut off their tails and put them away in his pocket.

"At last he came to a spot near the house of his Master where there was a deep marsh. He drove the live pig into this and covered it up with the muck. Then he stuck the tails he had cut off the others down into the mud, so that only their tips showed.

" 'Where are my pigs? Have you brought them all back?' the Master cried out. He was astonished and not at all pleased to see the Boy return safe and sound. He thought that the Tartaro would surely have eaten him up by this time.

" 'The pigs were tired out. They have buried themselves there in the marsh,' said the Boy. 'Come, you shall see.' Both went to the marsh, where they saw the pigs' tails sticking out of the mud.

"Taking hold of one tail, the Boy pulled out the live

pig, saying, 'This one is mine, as you have promised. Now count the tails of the others and you will see all are here.' The Master counted the full number of tails. But when he pulled them up one by one the tails came away in his hand. And the Boy said to him, 'That must be because the pigs are so fat and heavy.'

"The Master was not pleased, but he said nothing at all, because he did not want to lose the rest of his possessions. He stood silent as the Boy drove away the only live pig, but as he had many other animals he did not really suffer. The Boy took his pig home to his mother and he poured into her lap the money he had received for those he sold at the market. And if they lived well, I am sure that they died well too."

XIX. THE MAGIC SNUFF BOX

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WHOOO-OO-OO-OO! Whooo-oo-oo-oo! The wind is roaring around the corners of the farmhouse where Manesh and Mayi live. Like all others in the Basque country, their home faces the east, and because all the worst storms come from the west, that wall of their house has neither windows nor door.

"We built it like that," Amatchi explains to the children, "to keep out Mr. Wind. He goes everywhere. He sees everything. No crack nor crevice is too small for his searching breath to get in. He sees more than the sun or the moon or the stars, as Chiko found out when he was seeking his lost palace."

"Is there a story about Chiko?" Mayi asks eagerly.

"It is the tale of the Magic Snuff Box," her old grandmother replies. "All children know it. Have I never told

it to you? Close the door tight, Manesh, and put another log on the fire and you shall hear it.

"Once, long, long ago there was a young man named Chiko who was abroad on a journey. As he walked along the highroad he found a curious snuff box. He was turning it over and over in his hands, when to his surprise the lid flew open and a voice said, 'What do you wish for?' Chiko was frightened. He snapped the lid shut and thrust the box back into his pocket. But luckily for him he did not throw it away.

"As he went on far, far, far he said to himself, 'Idiot that you are, why do you not wish for something? It would do no harm to try.'

"So he took out the strange Snuff Box and lifted the lid.

" 'What do you wish for?' the voice said again, and Chiko replied, 'My hat full of gold.'

"At once his blue beret was heavy with gold pieces, and he was filled with joy for he thought to himself, 'Now I shall never more need for anything.'

"On, on, on he went, and one day he arrived at a beautiful palace. As he walked about the garden, looking at this thing and that thing, the King came to him and said, 'Ha, my young man, I suppose you wish you had a palace like this.'

"Chiko bowed to him politely and made no reply, but

that night he took his snuff box from his pocket and lifted its lid.

" 'What do you wish for?' asked the Snuff Box.

" 'Build me a palace with golden laths, and diamond tiles, and have all the furnishings of fine silver and gold,' he commanded. Hardly had he finished speaking the words when before him there stood just what he had asked for.

"Next morning the King was greatly astonished to see this beautiful palace, so much finer than his, with its golden laths and its diamond tiles blazing so splendidly under the sun's rays. He came to Chiko saying, 'You must indeed be a great man. I should like you to marry my daughter so that we may all live together in this elegant palace.'

"Now the daughter was lovely, so Chiko consented, and for a time they all lived happily together in the beautiful palace with the golden laths, the diamond tiles, and the furnishings of fine silver and gold.

"But the King and his wife were jealous of their daughter's husband, and they determined to find out the secret of his riches. The Queen gave her daughter no peace until at last she told her about the Magic Snuff Box. The wicked Queen became very unhappy. She wanted the Magic Snuff Box all for herself. And with the aid of a servant she stole it one night.

"When the lid was lifted and the voice of the Snuff

Box said to her, 'What do you wish for?' she quickly replied, 'Take me, my husband, and all of our servants, together with this beautiful palace, and set us down on the far side of the Red Sea. As for my daughter and her husband, it does not matter about them. Let them get along the best way they can.'

"When they awoke the next morning the young couple found themselves in a poor cottage. Their beloved palace and their Magic Snuff Box were nowhere to be seen. In vain they searched hither and yon, but not a trace could they find. Chiko lost no time in setting out on horseback to search for it, and he told his weeping wife that he would not return until he had found both the Snuff Box and their palace. He traveled far, far, far over land and sea, and when he had visited in vain all the neighboring countries he decided that he would next seek out the Moon.

" 'For,' he said to himself, 'he shines so high in the heavens above us that he must look down upon the whole earth. Perhaps he will know where my palace is.'

"By this time poor Chiko's money was gone, so he had to beg his bread from one place to another. But by hook or by crook he managed at last to reach the dwelling place of the Moon. There he met a little old woman. When she saw him she cried out:

" 'Young man, you must go away at once. I am the

Moon's mother, and I fear for your safety if he should find you here. He would surely eat you alive.'

"The young man told her of his great troubles, of how his palace had been stolen and how he could not go back to his wife until he had found it.

"Just then the Moon came to the window and at once said to his mother, 'I smell a human. Who has been here?'

" 'It is I, O Moon,' said the young man. 'I have come to you for aid. Have you seen in your journeys my stolen palace with its golden laths, with its diamond tiles and its furnishings of fine silver and gold?'

" 'No, I have not seen it,' said the Moon, taking pity upon the miserable Chiko. 'You should go ask the Sun. He shines brighter than I. Perhaps he has spied it out with his strong rays.'

"So poor Chiko set forth again, begging his bread from one house to the other. At last by hook or by crook he arrived at the home of the Sun. There he found another little old woman who called out to him to go away quickly.

" 'I am the Sun's mother,' she said. 'He does not like humans. He will surely devour you if he finds you here.'

"But Chiko told her that he had lost everything that made life worth while and that it was all the same to him whether he lived or died if he could not find his Snuff

Box and his palace. So the old woman hid him away in the cupboard.

"When the Sun came in he cried in a fierce voice, 'I smell a human. Bring him out, Mother, that I may eat him.'

" 'Have pity upon him, my son,' begged the old woman. 'He is so miserable. He has lost all his fortune and has come to ask you to help him.'

"Well, bring him forth. Then we shall see,' said the Sun.

"Chiko stood fearlessly before the Sun, who glowed down upon him with his one blazing eye, and he asked if by chance in the course of his journeying he had not seen a palace with gold laths, diamond tiles, and furnishings of fine silver and gold.

" 'No, I have not seen such a palace,' said the Sun. He felt sorry for this poor sad young man. 'But perhaps my friend the Wind may know where it is. There is no place the Wind does not go and there is nothing the Wind does not see. Go find the Wind! He only can tell you.'

"So poor Chiko set out once again and went as fast as he could, begging his way. At last by hook or by crook he came to the palace where the Wind lived. There he found a little old woman busy at work filling great barrels with water.

" 'What do you mean by coming here?' she cried. 'Do you not know that this is the palace of the terrible Wind?

I am the Wind's mother. He is planning a great storm and I am filling these barrels with water for him to take along with him. He will be in a rage when he comes home and he will surely devour you. Go away at once!'

"But Chiko replied that it was all one to him whether he was eaten or not. All he cared for was to find his lost palace. He seemed so unhappy that the old woman had pity upon him and hid him under the stairway.

"Soon after, the Wind arrived, rushing and roaring as if he would tear his palace from its very foundations. Before he drank up the water his mother had ready for him, he sniffed the air, roaring, 'I smell a human. Bring him out of his hiding place so that I may eat him up.'

"But his mother calmed him, saying she would do so after his luncheon. She set his food before him and filled his great goblets with water again and again. As he ate she told him the sad story of Chiko, how he had lost his palace with its golden laths, its diamond tiles, and its furnishings of fine silver and gold; how the Sun and the Moon had both let him live; and how they had sent him here because the Wind was known by everyone to be the wisest person in all of creation. When at last she brought him forth, Chiko fell on his knees before the Wind crying:

" 'Ah, Wind! Wind! Come to my aid! Tell me, oh, tell me, have you not seen my lost palace with its golden

laths, its diamond tiles, and its furnishings of fine silver and gold?'

"The Wind too felt pity for this young man who was in such misery.

" 'Yes, yes,' he roared, 'I have indeed seen that palace. All day long I have rushed round and round its roof and I have not been able to take off a single one of those diamond tiles. But your palace, young man, is far, far from here, on the other side of the Red Sea.'

"Chiko was overjoyed at the Wind's words. He was not afraid of the long journey, for he had already traveled so very far. He set out again with a light heart, and by hook or by crook he at last found his palace with its golden laths, its diamond tiles, and its furnishings of fine silver and gold. But he wanted his Magic Snuff Box as well, so he decided to go carefully. He asked if perhaps they did not need a gardener. They put him to work and he let some time go by without saying anything. In the meantime he made friends with that same palace maid who had helped the wicked Queen in her theft of the Snuff Box. He flattered and coaxed her and at last one night she brought out the Magic Snuff Box to show him.

" 'We must take care to put it back right away,' she said nervously, 'for if this Snuff Box should be lost, the mistress would surely skin me alive.'

"Chiko watched her as she hid it again in the room of

the wicked Queen, and the very next night when all were asleep he tip-toed in and took it out of its cubby-hole.

"Think of his joy when he lifted its lid and heard again the wonderful words, 'What do you wish for?'

" 'Take me with my palace back to my own country where my wife is awaiting me. And drop the King with his wicked queen and her wicked servant into the Red Sea.' Hardly had he spoken when he felt himself flying through the air; and before he could count ten his palace was back again in its old place. His wife wept tears of joy at his return, and for the rest of their lives they lived in their palace, filling their wants by means of the Magic Snuff Box, which they never let out of their sight again."

XX. THE DRAGON WITH THE SEVEN HEADS

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"Is it true, Amatchi, that there was once a dragon that lived in those mountains yonder?" The old grandmother and the two children are walking along the road to the village as Manesh puts this question. They all turn their eyes to the range of high hills that stand out so sharply against the blue sky.

"That I cannot say for certain," the old woman replies, "but I have heard that in the early days of the world such a dragon did dwell there, with his head resting on the highest peak of them all, and his great body coiling up and down over the little hills and around through the valleys. The people who lived then were careful to drive a certain number of animals up to the mountains that the dragon might be fed every so often, for if he grew

hungry and angry he was apt to open his mouth and, with a great breath, draw in whole flocks of sheep, or great herds of oxen. Sometimes even an entire village would disappear into his terrible maw.

"I'm glad I did not live then," Mayi says.

"But perhaps if you had," Amatchi replies, "you would have been saved by a handsome young prince. That is what happened in the tale of the terrible Dragon and the Princess Gachucha. You see, in the mountains of her father's kingdom there lived a dragon with seven heads, and seven great mouths that had to be fed. But I must go back to the very beginning, for this tale cannot be told without speaking first of Petit Yorge and his adventures with the Tartaros.

"Once upon a time there was a king who had three sons, the youngest and bravest of whom was called Petit Yorge. As the three brothers were always quarreling with one another, Petit Yorge decided that he would leave home and go out into the world where he could find peace. He put on old clothes so that he should look like a servant and coming to a great house, he engaged himself as a cowherd.

" 'Take the cows to yonder grassy spot on the mountainside,' his master commanded, 'but beware of their straying farther because they might get into the fields of the three Tartaros who live not far away. For some

reason my cows always want to graze on the land of those terrible giants.'

"Petit Yorge promised that he would be careful. Before he went to the meadows he bought a deck of playing cards and a hatchet with strong teeth cut in its sharp edge, for he had a plan to get the best of the giants. As the Master had foretold, the cows did escape and stray onto the lands of the three Tartaros. Straightway one of these terrible giants appeared before the young cowherd, and in an angry voice said:

" 'How dare you pasture your cows on my land? I shall eat you up right away.'

" 'Softly, softly, my friend!' said Petit Yorge, smiling gently. 'Let us play a game of cards first.' All Tartaros are fond of playing cards and Petit Yorge thought that in this way he might gain time.

"So they began to play. Soon the Tartaro let a card fall to the ground. Turning to the boy, he asked him to pick it up. But the lad knew that this was a favorite trick of the Tartaros. He had heard how, when their companion would bend down to pick up such a card, they would take advantage of his position to kill him. So Petit Yorge said, 'No, it was you who let that card fall; it is you who must pick it up.' And as the stupid Tartaro bent over, he took out his sharp-toothed hatchet and cut off his head.

"The next day, exactly the same thing happened with the second Tartaro, and on the morrow there came the third of the giants, who was larger and more terrible than either of his brothers.

" 'You wicked boy,' the third Tartaro roared, 'not content with allowing your cows to stray into my fields, you have killed both my brothers. I have come here to punish you.'

" 'Gently, gently, my friend,' Petit Yorge replied, smiling. 'Let us first play just one little game of cards. Afterward we shall see what we shall see.' The stupid Tartaro had not heard just how his brothers were killed, and he too let a card fall, asking the lad to pick it up for him. But as before, the boy said, 'No, you let it fall; you must pick it up,' and, as before, he cut off the giant's head with his sharp-edged hatchet.

"Petit Yorge knew that there were but three Tartaros. So when all had been killed, he made his way to the great house where they had lived. He called the servants together, announced the death of the Tartaros, and declared himself to be their new master. He found the cook preparing a fine dinner, and he feasted and drank until his stomach was full. Then he made one of the servants show him the riches of the Tartaros' palace. Gold and silver in bags and in barrels, jewels by the bucketsful, and all sorts of fine clothing he found in his new dwelling. And

SO PETIT YORGE AND THE TARTARO BEGAN TO PLAY CARDS

he even made friends with the Tartaros' dog, which he taught to bring him his dinner each day in the meadows.

"One day he rode abroad upon horseback and made his way up, up, up the steep mountainside. In the path he suddenly came upon a beautiful princess clad in seven rich silken robes and wearing gems in her hair. Tears were flowing down her cheeks and she looked sad indeed.

" 'Go away quickly, young man,' she cried as soon as she spied Petit Yorge. "It is enough that the terrible Dragon should devour one person. It is not necessary that you too should be killed.' And she began to cry afresh. When Petit Yorge asked her the meaning of her strange words she explained that she was the Princess Gachucha, the daughter of the King of all the land, and that she was to be eaten up by a terrible dragon.

" 'Did you not know,' she cried, 'that upon this mountain top there dwells a dragon with seven heads? Each day he eats a cow and a sheep and each Sunday he devours a man or a woman. We drew lots to see who should be his next victim and my name came first. My father's people were sad at the thought of the fate of their princess, and many accompanied me to the foot of the mountain, weeping and wailing. There they bade me good-bye, for they knew they could not help me, and so I am left to go to my death by myself.'

" 'Do not weep, Princess! You shall not die,' Petit Yorge

said, comforting her, 'for I have already cut off the heads of three Tartaros, and I can easily kill the Dragon as well.'

"Just as he said these words there came a hissing and a scraping, and out of the forest there glided a huge dragon covered with glistening scales. From each of his seven mouths there darted forth a bright tongue of flame.

" 'This girl is mine,' the Dragon hissed angrily. 'Leave her to me or I shall take you next.' But with a mighty swing of his sharp-toothed hatchet the youth gave the serpent a terrible blow, cutting off neatly three of his seven heads. Before he could attack him again the Dragon had disappeared into the forest.

" 'Well, you have given me one more day of life,' the Princess said to Petit Yorge. 'But to-morrow I must come here again and then he will surely devour me.'

" 'We shall see! We shall see!' cried the lad, and the Princess went off home to her father, who received her with great joy and surprise. The next day, as she was again making her way weeping up the side of the mountain, she met Petit Yorge riding on horseback.

" 'The serpent will surely come quickly to-day, and that will be the end of me,' wept the Princess Gachucha.

" 'Where is your courage?' the lad scolded. 'Take heart, my Princess. The Dragon shall not hurt you, for to-day I shall kill him. I will give you this spear, and when I

cut off his heads you must thrust it into his tail that we may be sure he is dead.'

"Soon there was heard a scratching and scraping and a mighty hissing, and out of the forest came the terrible Dragon with his four remaining mouths spouting long tongues of fire.

" 'This girl is mine. Leave her to me or it will be worse for you,' he roared to the youth. But for answer, Petit Yorge swung his sharp-toothed hatchet with all his might, and in a single blow he cut off the Dragon's four other heads, while the Princess thrust the spear into his tail to make sure he was dead.

"As the Princess Gachucha was thanking the youth he secretly cut seven small bits from the seven silken robes which she was wearing. When she had gone back to the palace of her father he took the tongue out of each of the seven heads of the Dragon, wrapping them in the bits of silk he had cut from the gowns of the Princess.

"The next day the King sent out a proclamation which stated that he who had killed the terrible Dragon should have the beautiful Princess Gachucha for his bride and half of his kingdom as well. He gave a great banquet to show his joy at her deliverance, and it was while all were gathered at the feast that there appeared before them a

charcoal burner, his clothes and his face so smeared with black soot that he was fearful to look upon.

" 'It was I who killed the serpent,' he said to the King. 'So it is I who should have the promised reward.'

" 'How is this, my daughter?' The King turned to Gachucha. 'Is this indeed your deliverer?'

" 'Nay, I do not think so,' the Princess replied, 'but then I was weeping so much that perhaps I did not see him quite clearly. Let us ask him for proofs.'

" 'Here are my proofs,' said the sooty-faced man, showing the seven heads of the Dragon. He had picked them up in the forest as he passed through after the battle.

" 'True, those are indeed proofs,' the King said slowly and sadly. He did not like the man's looks and he did not wish to give his beloved Gachucha to a black-faced charcoal burner. But he had passed his word and he would not go back on it. Just then, however, there was heard a noise at the door of the banqueting hall. In came Petit Yorge looking handsome indeed in the rich clothing he had found in the Tartaros' palace.

" 'Do you not know me, my Princess?' he cried eagerly. 'It is I, Petit Yorge, who killed the terrible Dragon, and I have brought the seven tongues I cut from the seven heads of the Dragon to prove my claim. For a still surer proof, look at these bits of silk! Bid your maid servants bring forth the seven silk robes you wore on that day

upon the mountainside, and I will show you the holes from which these pieces were cut.'

"When they had fitted the pieces of silk into the holes in the Princess's gowns there was no longer doubt as to the true Knight of the Dragon. Because of his lying tongue, the charcoal burner was soundly whipped in the courtyard of the palace, and the Princess Gachucha was married to Petit Yorge in the midst of great rejoicing. They loved each other until death, and they divided their time between the Tartaros' palace and the greatest house in Petit Yorge's half of the King's realm."

XXI. THE FAIRY BRIDGE OF LICQ

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Mayi and Manesh are sitting close to the hearthstones, roasting fat brown chestnuts in the red coals. It is a cold winter evening and the warmth from a fireplace is welcome in a house where there is no other heat. As she bends nearer a sudden gust of wind comes down the chimney, blowing the smoke out into Mayi's face. She draws back quickly and her old grandmother puts her spinning down in her lap to help the little girl wipe her stinging eyes.

"*Khia ederrer,*" says Amatchi, smiling. "That the smoke goes to the beautiful is an old Basque saying, so when you have smoke blown in your face, Mayi, you may be sure that when you grow up you will be one of the prettiest girls in the village."

"Perhaps I might even be the prettiest of them all," Mayi cries with delight.

"Gently, gently, my child!" the old woman warns her. "It is not well to think too much of good looks, and being too pretty may have its dangers. I remember how the prettiest girl of the village of Licq once barely escaped being carried off by the fairies, while those of her friends who were less good to look upon went their ways in safety. Listen and I will tell you the strange tale of how she was saved.

"The village of Licq lies in a far corner of that part of our country that we call the Soule. The land there is not gentle and smiling like our hills and dales here. It is made up of rugged mountains with deep valleys between them through which there rush roaring torrents. Close beside the village of Licq there was just such a deep gorge, and as there was no bridge across it the people could not visit the neighboring towns nor pasture their animals on the grassy slopes of the hills close by on the other side of the chasm.

"One day, as the men of the village were gathered under the great oak tree in the market place, they talked of this gorge and of their need for a bridge to take them across it.

" 'What shall we do?' they said to each other. 'We have long wanted a bridge, but the rocks and the cliffs are

so slippery and steep and the ravine is so deep that no one will attempt it.'

" 'Let us give the work to the fairy Laminaks that live in the grotto at the base of the gorge,' cried one of the old men. 'They could build us a bridge there without any trouble, and we could pay them whatever price they might ask.'

"The others thought this idea good, and so they sent messengers to the entrance of the grotto of the Laminaks. They called out the fairy people, saying, 'Oh, fairy Laminaks, the people of the village of Licq wish a bridge built that will span the steep chasm that shuts off their town from the neighboring country. The rocks are too slippery and the gorge is too dangerous for humans to work there, so we have come to ask you to help us.'

"The fairy people put their heads close together and they whispered long among themselves. Then one of them stepped out of their group and said, 'We will build your bridge, O men of the village of Licq. In one single night we will finish the work. If it be not done before the cock crows we shall ask for no payment. But if the bridge be completed before the cock's song is heard, then shall we take away with us the prettiest of all the maids in your village.'

"The men of Licq did not greatly fancy this bargain,

but they needed the bridge so badly that at last they consented.

"The very next night the fairy Laminaks began their difficult work. The people of the village peered out of their windows or hid behind trees to watch them as they toiled. One after another the stones seemed fairly to fly into their places, and the bridge took its shape before their very eyes.

"Now it was agreed by all that the prettiest girl in the village of Licq was the lovely Luicha, who was just as good as she was fair. It made her neighbors sad indeed to think that the fairies would soon take her away and that they would never see her fair face again. Saddest of all was Chalbat, the young man whom the lovely Luicha had promised to marry. He sat near the gorge with his head in his hands. With terror gripping his heart, he watched the stones laid up one on the other, and he said to himself:

" 'That bridge will be finished in less than half the time set, and long before cock-crow the fairy people will carry off my beloved Luicha. How can I stop them? Oh, how can I make the cock crow before they have finished their work?' And just then there came to him an idea that made him jump up from his seat and rush back to his home.

"Up, up, up went the bridge. Now the supports were all finished and the fairies began to lay the stones of the

floor. Before the watching people of Licq the bridge grew and grew, and their hearts became heavier and heavier as the moment drew near when it should be finished and the fairies should demand their prize. The men began to repent of their bargain and wish that they had not asked the fairy people to build the bridge for them.

"In the meantime, Chalbat had crept out to his chicken house where his hens and his cocks were sleeping snug on their perches. Gathering some dry sticks, he built a huge fire, and soon a bright blaze was lighting the chicken yard. At the same time the young man made with his hands the noise of a cock flapping his wings as if he were just ready to crow. A rooster on his perch awoke with a start. Seeing the ray of light that came in through the cracks and hearing what he took for another cock, he sleepily thought he had wakened late for some reason. So he hopped off his perch and he flapped his wings. Out through the darkness there rang forth his loud 'Cock-a-doodle-do.'

"The fairy bridge was all but finished. The little fairy Laminaks were just lifting the very last stone into place when they heard the song of the cock. With a screeching and crying they let the stone fall *splash!* down into the water; and they fled from the bridge, saying, 'Bad luck to that cock! What made him crow before it was time? If it had not been for him we should be carrying off our

beautiful prize instead of going away with these empty hands.'

"No one has ever been able to fit a stone into that gap in the wall of the Bridge of Licq, and if you should go there to-day you will see the hole left by the fairy Laminaks as they took flight. Chalbat, you may be sure, lost no time in marrying the lovely Luicha, and she was always fond of hearing him tell their children the tale of how he made the cock crow before it was dawn."

XXII. BILINCH AND THE THREE WAVES

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"WHY does that tiny ship hang in our church, Amatchi?"

Manesh asks his grandmother this question as they walk along the highroad toward home. It is Sunday and, like all the other good Basques of the village of Azcar, they have been to the morning service in the great church that stands on the village square.

Manesh and Mayi do not sit together in church. Mayi goes in with her mother and her grandmother and takes her seat on the main floor of the building, while Manesh follows his father through a door at the side which leads up to the special galleries reserved for the men folk. There are three of these galleries on each wall of the church. They are built one over the other, and Manesh always

likes best to go up into the highest so that he can see better the tiny ship that is hung on a cord from a hook in the very center of the church roof.

"That ship was put there more than two hundred years ago," his grandmother says, "to remind the priest and the people to pray for the fishermen who might be in danger far out at sea. In those days our men caught monster whales instead of the tiny sardines that now fill their nets, and they were often abroad on the water for weeks at a time. Many were their dangers from tempests and storms; and then, too, in those days there were said to be witches and fairies that lived far down under the waves. I suppose it was a ship much like the one in our church —only many, many times larger—that carried Bilinch through the three dangerous waves in the old fairy tale."

And as they walk on down the highroad the old woman tells the children this story:

"Long, long ago there was a boat that went every day out on the ocean to fish, and among its crew there was a lad about fifteen years old, whose name was Bilinch. The sailors were all excellent fishermen, but for some reason they had not been able to catch any fish for more than a year. They would hurry to be the first to arrive on the fishing grounds, but try as they would their nets yielded only dead fish or worthless minnows. And yet boats that lay just beside them caught so many that they

had scarce room enough to hold them. Day after day the same thing happened. The poor fishermen grew more and more downhearted. They could not understand it, for their boat and their nets were the best of the whole fleet.

"One night Bilinch and his captain busied themselves in the boat, making ready for an early start the next day at dawn. When all was in order they found that they still had time for a nap, so they lay down in the boat and both fell asleep. After a time Bilinch suddenly arose with a scream, and he tugged at the coat of the sleeping Captain, crying, 'Didn't you see them? Didn't you hear them? Those two witch women!' The Captain tried to make him explain, but he could not say another word, he was so upset.

"At dawn, when it was time for the boat to start out, Bilinch fell on his knees in front of the Captain.

" 'I cannot go to sea to-day,' he cried. 'Please do not make me.'

" 'Why not?' asked the Captain. 'You must tell me why not.' But for a long time all that the lad would say was, 'Oh, let us stay home! I cannot, I cannot.'

"Now Bilinch had engaged himself for a whole fishing season, and as he had given his word that he would go out every day, the Captain told him that he could not stay at home unless he had a good reason.

" 'If we go, Master, we shall all be drowned,' cried Bilinch in despair.

" 'We run the same risk as you,' the Captain said sternly. 'This is no longer a joke. We can waste no more time. Let us be off.'

"For some reason Bilinch seemed afraid to speak further, and so the oars were put into the water and the boat had already gone a part of the way when Bilinch began to cry.

" 'I will tell you all, Master, and please God may no harm come to me of it,' said he. 'Last night in the boat you fell asleep first and I was about to follow your example when I saw two phantoms that looked like witch women. I was so frightened I could scarcely breathe. That was what saved me, because they thought me asleep. They danced about us chanting, and then all at once I felt our boat rise high up into the air. It floated on and on until at last it came to rest in the top of a huge olive tree. The witch women peered at us to be sure we were still sleeping, then they disappeared. I opened my eyes to look about me, and I broke a twig off the tree that I might see the better. I was just about to wake you, Master, when I heard them returning. Soon the boat was again high in the air, and in a few minutes we were back at our dock. There the witch women stood looking down at us, and the older one said:

THE POOR FISHERMEN GREW MORE DOWNHEARTED

" ' "Bid these men good-bye, Daughter, for you will never see them again. Two hours from now their boat will be at the bottom of the sea."

" ' "But the ocean is calm," the younger one said.

" ' "None the less, none the less, they shall soon be on the sea's bottom, for I shall send to drown them three great waves, the first wave white as milk, the second one clear as tears, and the third one red as blood. They may escape the first two, but only one thing can save them from the third."

" ' "Why do you hate them so?" asked the younger of the witches.

" ' "It is my fate," cried the other. "I have followed them all winter, and I have ruined their fishing. But to-morrow my power over them will be gone, and I am commanded to finish them off. There is but one way of escape for them."

" ' "How is that, Mother?" the younger witch asked.

" ' "If they should throw a harpoon into the heart of the great red wave they would be free, for that wave will be myself, and such a thrust would kill me. But they can never learn this secret, for you and I are the only ones who know it in the whole world."

" 'That, Master, is the danger that threatens us. Oh, I pray you, let us go back,' Bilinch cried, falling down on his knees in front of the Captain.

"The sailors could not at first believe this weird story. They said it must be only a dream, but when the lad showed them the olive twig he had plucked they shook their heads wondering, for there was no olive tree near their village nor in the country about it. They decided that they had best be prepared in case the tale should be true. So the strongest of them all took his stand in the prow with a harpoon in his hand. The sea was like glass and the boat went peacefully along on its way, but a strange fear gripped the hearts of the sailors.

"Then all at once there welled up in front of them a great wave of white, so thick that it seemed indeed to be milk.

" 'The wave white as milk!' cried Bilinch.

" 'The wave white as milk!' the rest repeated, wondering. And the rowers bent to their oars with all their might so that the boat shot safely through the great wave of white.

"But soon they saw rise up before them a wave even larger, and as clear as a crystal.

" 'The wave clear as tears!' cried Bilinch.

" 'The wave clear as tears!' cried the others in hushed, fearful voices. And again the oarsmen bent to their oars. The wave of tears gave off hot mist that made their eyes smart, but they kept to their task until the boat had won its way through to the calm waters beyond. A few

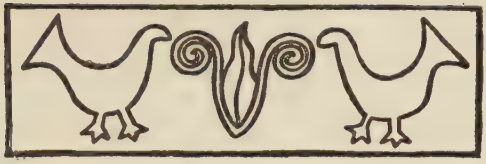
THEY MADE MUCH OF BILINCH; HE HAD SAVED THEM

moments of easy rowing, and then they saw in front of them a wave of bright red. There was a dead silence among the sailors while Bilinch whispered, 'The wave red as blood!'

" 'The wave red as blood!' echoed the crew, scarcely daring to breathe. The strongest of them all raised high his harpoon. The prow of the boat came nearer and nearer to the wall of red water. With a mighty effort the sailor thrust the harpoon into the very heart of the red wave. A terrible groan resounded over the ocean as the wave parted and threw its reddish foam high and far to either side. Then the sea became calm, and a mighty cheer rang out from the throats of the oarsmen.

"The rest of the day all the crew were kept busy drawing in fish. Their nets were so full that their arms fairly ached and they had to throw everything else into the sea in order to make room for their tremendous catch. Into their nets there came none but the very finest of fish, and enough were caught in that one day to make up for the losses of the whole winter. The Captain and the sailors made much of Bilinch. They were filled with joy because he had saved them and because the wicked witch that had followed them throughout the long winter was now gone forever."

XXIII. THE LEGEND OF THE CRUCHE



XXIII. THE LEGEND OF THE CRUCHE

"WHAT is it that goes to the fountain singing and comes back to the house crying?" Mayi calls out this riddle to her mother as she enters the dooryard from the direction of the village.

"What I have on my head," the woman replies, smiling down at the child as she lifts the clay water jar from the little round cushion that rests on her black hair. "And it is no wonder that the water jar sings when, empty, it goes to the fountain and cries when its sides almost burst with the water it holds on its return."

The little girl is sitting beside her grandmother on the stone steps that lead into their farmhouse. They have just come back from the fields with the sheep and the goats and they are resting for a moment before they take up their work again. Mayi runs to fetch a cup into which

her mother pours out fresh water from the long spout of the *cruche,* as they call this clay water jar.

"Why do you always carry your *cruche* on your head?" Mayi asks as her mother starts to go into the house.

"Because it is easier, my dear," is her mother's reply.

And the old grandmother adds, "And because Basque women have carried their water jars so ever since the day when the *cruche* saved the beautiful Maider from the blow of the rod of the wicked fairy."

"How could a water jar save anyone from a fairy, Amatchi?" Mayi asks, her eyes opening wide with wonder and interest.

"It was magic, to be sure," says the old woman, "but save her it did, as you shall hear. Maider and her two friends, Gachina and Kattalin, were the daughters of the masters of the three great châteaux that lay close to each other. One morning the three maidens met by the brook in the forest to watch the sun rise over the great mountain to the east. The masters of the three châteaux usually kept a close watch over their daughters, but this morning, in the hubbub of their preparations for a hunting party, the maidens had been able to slip out of their homes without being seen.

"As they danced and laughed in their glee at their escape there appeared suddenly before them in the soft light of the wood a handsome young knight. A cap of

bright scarlet covered his yellow hair, a mantle of velvet embroidered with gold reached his knees, and he wore high gaiters of fine leather and spurs that clicked as he walked. In his hand he carried a stick with a silver knob on its end. With a great greyhound leaping and jumping about him, he stepped forward, smiling at the three lovely maidens.

" 'May a good day be given you, fair nymphs of the wood,' he cried, bowing low and sweeping the ground with his scarlet cap. 'You are no doubt from those three châteaux that I see in the distance. As for me, I come from so far that the sun has set many times during the galloping of my horse. I am the son of a great and powerful duke. I roam the world over seeking a cure for my misfortunes, for beneath my happy appearance I am beset by constant torture.'

" 'Welcome to you, Knight of Provence,' the three girls replied. 'May our sky be kind to you and our land give you what you seek, and may you find here the cure for your misfortune.'

" 'Ah, that there might indeed be one among you that would break the evil spell under which I am walking,' said the strange knight. 'Know you all, that when I was a babe I was fretful and ill. My sleep was disturbed by the slightest whisper. Near our château there was a pond in which there lived hundreds of frogs whose deep croak-

ing often made the night hideous. So my mother, in order to give me the rest I needed to snatch me from death, sent out twenty servants in the dark to beat about this pool and to scare the frogs off. But alas, this also disturbed the fairies who were wont to dance there in the light of the moon. They were thrown into a rage, and the very next night through my open window there came one of their number who bent above me as I lay in my cradle. "Unhappy child, to whom we owe our exile, we fairies curse you," she cried in her anger. "Never again shall you drink fresh water, and if you but try to moisten your tongue with it the air shall change it to mud and filth on your lips. Our spell shall follow you wherever you go, and you shall not be released until in your wanderings you find a maiden brave enough to defy us. For as soon as our spell is broken and water passes your lips, then shall our rod strike down your deliverer."

" 'The wicked fairy spoke but the truth. From that day to this my burning lips have never tasted the freshness of water. By the payment of a great sum of money my father secured from an old chemist the secret of a miserable potion which allows me to live. It quenches my thirst for the moment, but sends liquid fire through all my veins. Ah, maidens, it is from you that I ask my deliverance. Is there not among you one brave enough to defy the wicked fairies and so to break the spell? But

what good are my promises of treasures and jewels, of fine coaches and horses, of a crown and even a duke's hand in marriage, for at the breaking of the fairies' charm we may both be destroyed. With you, as with the rest, all will be in vain because of such fears.'

"To his surprise, the words of the young Duke were met with the sound of merry laughter. It came from the lips of the beautiful Maider, who said to the knight, 'Fear? What is fear? My old nurse knew magic and from her I have learned secrets that make me fear no one, be he man or be he fairy. Come back here to-morrow at this same hour and you shall find a charm that will lift forever the fairy's curse from your shoulders. And you, dear Gachina and Kattalin, go and make ready for my wedding feast. Say to my father that to-morrow his daughter will enter her home again as a duchess.'

"The other two girls were filled with wonder and astonishment. They were afraid for their friend, and on their return they stopped to tell her father what had taken place in the forest. There they learned that the hunting party was to be abroad for two days, and so they went on to their homes, eager, yet fearing to see what the morning would bring.

"Maider spent the day and the night in the forest alone. 'So the rod will strike, O wicked fairy,' she said under her breath. 'We shall see, we shall see. As for me, I know

that you are already beaten.' She bent down over the clay banks of the brook, and with the butterflies and bees fluttering around her she began her mysterious work. Digging her fingers into the wet black clay, she took up a lump which she began to mold into a strange shape. She turned it this way and that. She poked it and she patted it. Now and again she laid it down on the grass while she went into the forest to seek certain things of which she alone knew the secret power. At last under her nimble fingers the lump of wet clay began to take on the shape of a round water jar such as your mother has just brought home from the village fountain. All day and night she kept to her task.

"When the next morning came she greeted the young knight and Kattalin and Gachina with a radiant smile. She stood there before them straight and tall, bearing on her head a beautiful vase with rosy lights in its sides and drops of crystal water hanging from its long spout. Calling the knight to her, she held the vase to his lips, while down his throat there flowed the cooling stream of spring water. Hardly had he finished drinking and scarcely had she replaced the jar on her head when *crash!* the invisible rod of the fairy fell upon the vase. The pieces flew in all directions, but Maider stood unharmed. Stretching forth her hand to the knight, she cried:

" 'You see, it has happened as I have promised. The

curse is lifted at last. The fairy's rod has struck, but it has broken only this *cruche*, and many another like it can be made. You and I are unharmed.'

"With joy in his heart, the young man placed his ducal ring on the finger of the fearless Maider. Followed by Kattalin and Gachina, they all made their way back to the château, where the bells in the tower were just sounding for the return of the hunters. So handsome and good did Maider's father find the young Duke that he gladly gave his consent to their wedding; and if they lived well, they must have died well too."

XXIV. THE TWO MULE DRIVERS

XXIV. THE TWO MULE DRIVERS

"Iosep is a cheat," Manesh cried angrily. "I will never make another wager with him for he does not play fair."

"Slowly, slowly, my child," says his grandmother quietly. "Come draw your stool closer and tell me about it."

"It was to-day after school," Manesh begins, almost weeping, "Iosep and I made a bet to see who could run the fastest down the road to the great oak tree at the very end of the village. I was beating Iosep so badly that he fell back out of sight, but when I reached the oak tree he was there before me and he declared he had won. He had jumped over the fence and taken a short cut through the gardens of Monsieur Salaberry. And that was a cheat, for we had decided to run the race along the highroad."

"Do not worry, Manesh," said his grandmother comforting him. "So long as it was not you who did not play fair you may be content. Cheaters are always punished in the long run, although at first it may seem that they have the best of the bargain. Listen and I will tell you the tale of two men—one was honest and the other a cheat—and of how each one of them got his just deserts.

"As often happens in this world, my son, there were two mule drivers who made their living by carrying loads from one part of the country to another. Each of them had seven fine sturdy mules, and when they met on the highroad they would boast to each other of the strength of their animals. Each one declared that his mules were the best. At last they decided to end their disputes by making a test that should show which of the mule trains could carry the heavier load, and the loser was to give all his mules to the winner.

"Now one of these mule drivers was very dishonest. By means of a lie, he won the test, and he took for his own the seven fine mules of the Honest Mule Driver.

"The Honest Mule Driver was the father of a large family, and as he saw his mules going off down the road he threw himself on the ground in the depths of despair.

" 'What shall I do now? Oh, what shall I do, now that my mule train is gone?' he groaned to himself. 'How shall I get food for my poor hungry children, and what shall I

HE REALIZED THE WITCHES WERE HOLDING MIDNIGHT REVELS

ever say to my wife? I shall not go home, for I cannot face her.'

"He wandered about sadly until it grew dark when he found himself standing upon a certain stone bridge.

" 'This bridge will give me the shelter I need for tonight,' he thought, as he hid himself away beneath its stone arch.

"About midnight the Honest Mule Driver awoke to hear the sound of many voices, with shouting and music. As he listened, he realized to his horror that above on the stone floor of the bridge, witches were holding one of their midnight revels. One witch cried 'Husta' and another cried 'Fusta,' and to the noise of the tambourines they began their weird dancing. The Honest Mule Driver kept still as a mouse for he feared they might find him and perhaps do him harm. From where he lay hidden he could see the edge of the bridge where two of the witches stood looking down into the stream that flowed through the ravine below.

" 'The Lady of the Great House at the foot of the mountain has been ill for seven years,' he heard one of them say. 'No one is able to cure her. Humans are stupid. I could make her well in a day.'

" 'How could you cure her?' the other witch asked.

" 'By taking her to the door of the church in the square of the village of Etchebar,' said the first witch. 'Seven

years ago the Lady went with her husband to a feast at that church, and as she came out of the door she threw away a piece of the church bread. A toad sitting beside the step caught the bread in his mouth and has held it there ever since. Not until this toad has been found and not until the Lady has eaten the crumb of bread she threw away will she be well.'

"The Honest Mule Driver repeated these words over and over to himself that he might not forget them, for he thought they might be of service to him. The next morning he went home again to his wife. He said nothing at all about the loss of his mules, but made ready to go forth upon a long journey. With his bundle on his back he went far, far, far, until he came to the foot of the mountain. Knocking at the door of the Great House where the Sick Lady lived, he asked if he might rest there for a day and a night as he was weary with traveling. The Master received him kindly, giving him the best place on the bench beside the blazing hearth and asking him questions about the travels he was making. In return the Honest Mule Driver inquired politely as to the health of his household.

" 'Alas, my lady has been ill these seven long years,' the Master replied. 'In vain have we tried to cure her of her strange sickness, but she grows no better. I have promised

THEY FOUND THE TOAD WITH THE BREAD IN HIS MOUTH

to give all he asks to that one who shall make her well again.'

" 'I think I can cure her,' said the Honest Mule Driver. 'Yes, I am sure I can cure her, if I can but see her.' So they took him into the room where the poor Sick Lady lay stretched out on her bed.

" 'Do you remember, madame,' said the Honest Mule Driver, 'that some seven years gone you attended a feast at the church that stands on the square of the village of Etchebar?'

" 'Aye, I remember that all too well,' was the poor Lady's reply, 'for it was on the night of that very day that I first fell ill.'

" 'Do you remember too that, as you came out of the church door, you threw away a bit of the bread that you had been eating? A toad sitting beside the stone door-step caught that crumb of bread in his mouth and has kept it there ever since. Not until we have found this toad and you have eaten that bread will you be well again.'

"All were astounded at the words of the Honest Mule Driver, and the Master of the Great House hastened to go with him to the door of the church in the village of Etchebar. There, sure enough, beneath the stone they discovered the toad with the bit of bread in its mouth. Picking it up carefully, the Master carried it back to the Great House at the foot of the mountain. The Sick Lady took

the bread from its mouth with her own fingers. As soon as she had eaten it she felt the strength return to her body, and she declared herself cured.

"Think of the happiness in the Great House that day! A fine feast was ordered, and as they all sat about the table with its golden plates heaped with rich food, the Master turned to the Honest Mule Driver and said:

" 'Tell me, what do you wish? My joy is so great at the release of my lady that I will give you the double of what you may ask.'

" 'Seven mules, Master,' the Honest Mule Driver cried. 'I lately lost my seven fine mules through the lying trick of a false friend, and all that I wish is to have seven more like them. Give me but seven mules and I shall be well content.'

"But the Master was so grateful that he gave the Honest Mule Driver not only seven fine mules, but the money with which to buy seven more just as strong.

"The Honest Mule Driver then went on his way, beaming with happiness. With his fourteen fine mules he began again carrying loads from one place to another, and his business grew and grew until he was so rich that his family wanted for nothing.

"One day, as he was crossing the Bridge of the Witches, he met the Dishonest Mule Driver walking sadly alone.

" 'Well, my friend, how goes it with you?' asked the

Honest Mule Driver. He did not feel unkindly toward the other now that he had a train of mules twice as big as the one that had been stolen from him.

" 'Badly, badly,' replied the Dishonest Mule Driver. 'My fourteen mules died one after the other and I now have not a single one left. Where did you get such a train? When I saw you last you had not a mule left. Tell me, how did you do it?'

" 'It was under this very bridge that I learned the secret that brought me my new mules,' said the Honest Mule Driver. 'At midnight the witches dance on this bridge, and if you hide beneath it perhaps you too may learn something that will help you.'

" 'That evening the Dishonest Mule Driver hid himself under the bridge, and at midnight the witches began to arrive with much noise and music. This one cried 'Husta' and the other cried 'Fusta' and to the noise of the tambourines they began their weird dancing. Then, as he listened, the Dishonest Mule Driver heard one of them say:

" 'The Sick Lady of the Great House at the foot of the mountain has been cured at last. Someone must be listening to the secrets we tell here. Let us look about, and if we can find him let us give him such a punishing that he will not soon come again to spy upon us!'

"All the witches trouped down under the bridge, and of

course they found hiding there the Dishonest Mule Driver. He started to run away as fast as he could, but they caught him before he had gone more than two paces. This one beat him, and that one kicked him. Between them they finally tore off his clothes and threw him, bruised and beaten, into the bramble bushes on the edge of the stream in the ravine. So you see in the end the Dishonest Mule Driver was very well paid for cheating his friend."

THE HONEST MULE-DRIVER AGAIN CARRIED LOADS

XXV. THE SICK FAIRY

XXV. THE SICK FAIRY

"How good that bread smells!" Mayi cries as she watches her mother pull two more round loaves out of the stone oven at the back of the fireplace and place them on the long kitchen table with the others that were already baked. In many of the homes of the neighboring farmers bread is bought from the baker, but Mayi's mother thinks this far too costly, and, besides, she likes to bake for her family herself, as did her mother and her grandmother before her.

Baking day is always a busy time for Mayi. She rises early with the rest of the household, and as soon as her morning duties are done she hastens to bring in armfuls of sticks to build up the fire under the oven. The logs for the soup pot are pushed over to one side of the hearth, where

her grandmother busies herself preparing the vegetables and stirring the soup for their dinner and supper.

Mayi's mother has no time to-day for anything except the baking. It was she who kneaded the dough last night in the great wooden kneading trough, and it is she who molds the round loaves and the flat corn cakes before they are put into the oven. Enough bread must be made to last the whole week, and as these hard-working people have big appetites, it takes a good deal.

Mayi has lined some of the earthenware pots with clean chestnut leaves, thus making them ready for cooking the cakes of yellow cornmeal. She stands at her mother's elbow, ready to run errands or to help in any way that she can.

"What beautiful white bread!" Mayi exclaims. "My mother's bread is the finest and whitest in all the world, isn't it, Amatchi?"

"I know of no better bread maker in our whole village," the old woman replies as she stirs and stirs the vegetable soup bubbling and boiling in its black iron pot. "But they do say that the bread that is made by the fairies is of a fineness and a whiteness never known to a human."

"Have you ever seen fairy bread?" the little girl asks curiously.

"Not I," says Amatchi. "Nor has anyone that I know.

But my mother used often to tell me a story about a woman who once tasted the bread of the fairies and who tried in vain to bring a piece of it with her back to her home."

"Why couldn't she bring it back?" Mayi asks as she lays another stick on the fire under the oven.

"I will tell you the whole story," her grandmother replies, "and perhaps that will make our work go the faster. As often happens in this world, there was a woman who lived with her husband in a certain village. Her name was Catiche, and she was known far and wide for her skill in curing the sick.

"It was the morning of the feast of St. Jean. Catiche had risen long, long before sun-up to make ready for the guests who were coming to celebrate the day with her, when suddenly she heard a knock at her door. Going to open it, she found there a beautiful maiden clad in a gown of silk and with hair the color of gold.

" 'Catiche,' said the maiden, 'you must come with me to a house in the forest. There is a sick woman there who needs your aid sadly.'

" 'But who may you be?' Catiche asked the maiden. 'I am sure I have never seen you before.'

" 'That you shall know later,' was the reply. 'But hurry, oh, hurry! You must come right away.'

" 'I cannot come to-day. I have my breakfast to get and my soup pot to fill for the dinner we give for the feast of St. Jean.'

" 'You must come none the less!' cried the maiden impatiently. 'When you return you will find your soup pot full to the brim and dinner ready to eat. And if you can only help us cure this poor sick woman, you will never regret it.'

"At last, after more urging, Catiche consented, and she followed her guide deep, deep, deep into the forest. To her surprise, they stopped at last in an open meadow surrounded by a thick screen of green leaves. There was no house nor sick woman to be seen, and she began to be angry.

" 'Is it for nothing that you have brought me away from my home on such a busy morning as this?' she demanded of the maiden with her silken gown and hair the color of gold.

" 'Patience, patience, Catiche! Wait and you shall see. Now take this rod and strike the earth here three times.' The maiden handed the woman a slender wand cut from the branch of a dogwood tree.

"Catiche had barely touched the earth the third time when the leaves parted before her and she saw open slowly a huge iron gate. Wondering, she followed the maiden down the flower-edged path which lay beyond it, coming

at last to a fairy house which shone both inside and out with the rich gleam of gold. Through one room after another, each more splendid than the last, she was led on and on, until she finally stepped into a great chamber, the most gorgeous of all. There on a bed in the center of the floor lay a pale, beautiful lady who, she soon learned, was the Queen of the Fairies. Many fairy figures were seen in the vast room. They sat on the window sills, on the chairs and the couches, but they moved never a muscle. Without saying a word, they fixed their bright eyes on Catiche as she began to care for the sick fairy. She bathed her and rubbed her and then she gave her a drink made of powerful herbs that quickly brought the roses back into her white cheeks. In a short time the fairy Queen sat up on her couch. Her illness was gone.

"Then did all the fairy figures hop down from their places and crowd round Catiche, kissing and petting her and pouring out thanks to her for saving their queen. They placed her at a table and set strange, delicious food down in front of her. But of all that they gave her, the thing that pleased Catiche most was the fine sweet white bread.

" 'Though I may be one of the best bread makers in all our village,' she thought to herself, 'never have I tasted bread so fine as this. If only I might take a bit home in

my pocket to show to the neighbors!' And she secretly hid a piece under the folds of her ample gown.

"When it came time for her to go, the same maiden led the way back to the iron gate into the forest. But to their surprise the gate was shut tight. They tugged and they pulled but they could not get it open. They tapped the ground with the rod made of the branch of the dogwood tree, but still the iron gate remained tightly shut. Then the maiden turned to Catiche, saying:

" 'You are taking something away with you from the palace of the fairies.'

" 'No, I have nothing,' Catiche replied, for she did not remember the bit of fairy bread.

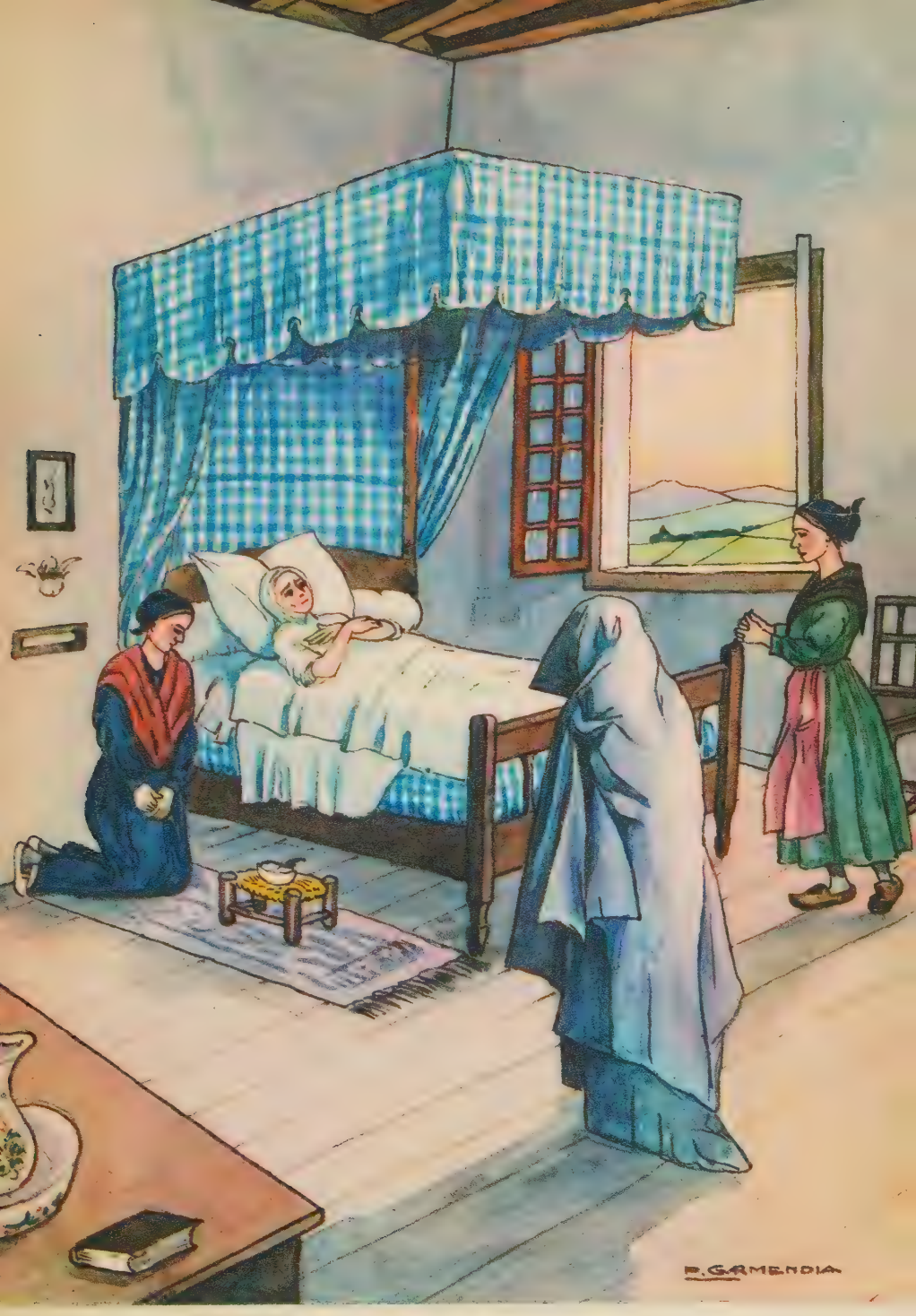
"They tugged and they pulled again at the gate.

" 'But you must have taken something; it is for that reason this gate will not open,' the maiden insisted.

" 'No, I have nothing of any value at all,' Catiche replied. 'Nothing except this small bit of bread. I wanted to show my neighbors at home how white is the bread that you fairies eat. Truly, it is as white as the snow.'

" 'But you cannot take even that away through this door,' said the maiden, shaking her head. 'You must leave it here with me. None of our belongings may go out into the world.' And when Catiche had handed the bit of bread back to her the gate straightway flew open.

"As the fairy maiden bade her good-bye she gave



THERE ON A BED LAY A PALE, BEAUTIFUL LADY—THE QUEEN

Catiche a small golden pear as payment for her good deed in curing the sick fairy.

" 'Hide this golden pear well,' she warned the woman. 'Put it away in your cupboard where no one may see it, and each morning you will find a pile of gold pieces lying beside it. But beware that you do not tell its secret to even one human being, for if you should do so you will surely be sorry.'

"Catiche made her way back to her home where, as the fairy maiden had promised, her soup pot was full and bubbling over the fire. She hid her golden pear well. To her delight, the next day and the next day and every morning thereafter she found lying beside it a pile of shining gold pieces. She was soon able to pay off all the debts on their farm and to buy more sheep, goats, and oxen.

"Now her husband was a very curious man. He hated to think that she had a secret that he did not know. Again and again he would say to his wife, 'Come, Catiche, come, I pray you to tell me. Where do all these golden coins come from?'

"And she would reply earnestly, 'Do not ask me, my husband, for I may not tell you. Is it not enough that we have become rich?'

"But day after day the man tagged after her skirts, asking the same thing over and over. At last she was fairly worn out with his nagging. She took him to the cupboard

and showed him the golden pear there in its hiding place. But alas, the very next morning when she went to gather up the new golden pieces, the cupboard was bare. The golden pear had disappeared and it was never found again."

XXVI. THE TALE OF THE MAKILA

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"I AM off for the market," says Manesh in a strange deep voice, as with his father's walking stick in his hand he parades round the huge kitchen before his grandmother and his sister Mayi.

Manesh likes to play with this stick of his father's which he calls a *makila.* Amatchi has just told him to hang it up in its place on the wooden case of the old grandfather clock, but before he obeys he pretends that he is grown-up and that, like all the men of his village, he walks abroad with a *makila.*

The *makila* in Manesh's hand is a beautiful cane made from a slender shoot of the medlar tree. While it was still growing the *makila* maker scarred it in many places with the sharp point of his knife, and wrapped it with a cloth that the rain might not get into the cuts he had made.

It was not until much later, when these cuts had healed into the waving ridges that now make up its design, that he came and cut the shoot from the tree.

"I like this round knob of horn on the top," says the boy as he looks down at the cane. He examines the narrow brass band and the jacket of braided leather just below the knob, and he runs his fingers over the dark polished wood of the stick with the raised pattern upon it.

"The best thing of all about Father's *makila,*" says his sister Mayi, "is the motto that is carved on the wide brass band at the bottom: 'Come if you dare.' How fine that sounds! No wonder men are brave when they carry *makilas.*" Their father has often told the children of the *makila* of the olden days which was used as a weapon as well as a cane and which sometimes had a needlelike sword hidden inside its shaft.

"Put your father's stick back on its hook on the clock case, as I have told you, Manesh," says Amatchi, laughing at the boy strutting before her. "Your father will be angry if he does not find it in place. Nothing is more precious to a good Basque than his trusty *makila;* and this has been so ever since the wicked fairy put her spell on the dwarf, Chatorra, and the first *makila* was made."

Manesh hurries to hang the stick up on the clock, for he knows by the tone of his grandmother's voice that a story is coming.

"This is the tale of the very first *makila,*" the old woman begins. "It was told to me by my grandfather and he in his turn had it from his grandfather. It all happened long ago, oh, very long ago, before anyone can remember. In those days the old Master of the Great House of Lur-Minttoa was so badly crippled with gout that he had to be helped wherever he went, and of all those who served him he liked best to lean on the sturdy shoulder of a little dwarf, whose name was Chatorra.

"Everyone about the Great House of Lur-Minttoa was fond of this dwarf, for in spite of his small body he had a big heart of purest gold and his brown eyes were soft with kind thoughts toward his fellows. His slender fingers were always busy doing some service for those about him, and so good was he that the others often forgot that he was not just as they were. As soon as he awoke in the morning the Master called Chatorra to him, and throughout the day when something was wanted it was to the dwarf that he turned. Even when he rode abroad to the meetings of the lawmakers at the Stone of Ustaritz, Chatorra followed close behind him, riding upon a little wild horse that he had caught in the mountains.

"Now the old Master of the Great House of Lur-Minttoa had a daughter, Madelen, who was as beautiful as the night. Her eyes were like two stars, and her hair, as black as the coat of a raven, was so long and so thick that

no kerchief could be made to hide it completely. The girl's room was in the tower of the Great House. Sitting there at her window, she would look out toward the blue hills beyond, thinking perhaps of the handsome young prince who would some day come to take her away as his bride.

"Often as she gazed into space, lost in her daydreams, the poor dwarf would stand hidden in the shelter of the rose tree just under her window and look up at her face with a sharp pain in his heart. For months now Chatorra had been in love with Madelen, but he felt sure that with his unfortunate form he could not hope to win her. Each evening when she went down the steps to fill her water jar at the fountain he followed her with his eyes. Madelen loved to linger there in the twilight, and the sweet sound of her singing floated back to Chatorra across the rose-scented garden. The charm of her voice and the beauty of her face, with its frame of black hair, drove the poor dwarf almost mad with his love for her.

"One evening Chatorra waited under the rose tree at the foot of the tower until Madelen looked out at the stars that dotted the heavens above them.

" 'Madelen, I love you,' he cried, trembling a little at the thought of his boldness.

" 'Who speaks so to me?' the maiden called out, her

THE SWEET SOUND OF HER SINGING FLOATED TO THE DWARF

heart fluttering at the idea that perhaps her handsome young prince had come to fetch her at last.

" 'Do not ask who I am until I have told you my story,' said the voice from the rose tree. 'I am the son of the master of a great house in another part of the world, and until I was fifteen years old I was as straight and as tall as the other lads of the town. Then one fateful night I stumbled upon the revels of the witches as they danced in their secret glade in the forest. Had I but gone away at once, I should not be in this plight. But I hid in the bushes, where alas! I was discovered by one of the dancers. The witches pulled me from my hiding place, and in their anger at being so spied upon, they turned me into a dwarf, saying that I must bear this curse until I had won the hand of a beautiful maiden. They brought me through the air to the door of the Great House of Lur-Minttoa, where your father, the Master, took me into his service.'

" 'Can this be our own Chatorra who tells me this tale?' Madelen cried, peering down into the shadows below her.

" 'Yes, it is I, your Chatorra,' was the dwarf's reply. 'Have pity upon me, sweet Madelen! Do not send me away from you! My spirit is more beautiful than my unfortunate form, and my love for you is so great that I would give my life to serve you. Oh, that you might only learn to love me a little, too, and that I might be released!'

"Madelen's heart fairly ached for the poor bewitched

Prince. As she thought of his misery, she was overcome by her feeling of pity for him, and she said to him softly:

" 'I am not angry, my friend, and indeed I shall not send you away. Who does not love you here in our household? Give me but a little time to think over these things. Perhaps I may even find some way to help you. Come to me here at this time to-morrow and I will give you my answer.'

"Chatorra was lifted to the seventh heaven with joy and hope, but as he was turning to go there appeared before him that one of the witch dancers who had changed him into a dwarf. She had followed him thither to gloat over his fate. Now, having heard the words of the gentle Madelen, she feared that perhaps her pity might cause this beautiful maiden to give her hand to the dwarf and that thus the spell she had cast might be lifted from his bent shoulders. With mutterings and moanings she began to weave over him a still more powerful charm, and in a trice her evil work was done.

"Next morning, when the old Master of the Great House awoke, his first call was for Chatorra.

" 'The dwarf is nowhere to be seen,' the servants informed him. 'He must have run away during the night.'

" 'Nonsense, nonsense!' cried the Master. 'I cannot get on without Chatorra. He must be found.' And when no

trace of the dwarf could be uncovered, the gouty old Master took up the search himself. Limping and halting, he made a tour of the Great House, of the fields and the gardens. But no smiling, gentle-eyed Chatorra answered his calls.

" 'At last he came to the foot of the tower where Madelen dwelt, and there, leaning against its walls of stone, he spied a strange-looking object.

" 'See this odd cane!' he cried. 'Where did it come from with its round knob of horn, its jacket of leather, and its trimmings of copper and brass? In all my days I have not seen its like.'

"He bent down to pick up the strange walking stick, and to his surprise the knob fitted his hand like the grasp of an old friend. Leaning upon it, he began to walk about through the gardens.

" 'Let the ungrateful Chatorra go,' he cried. 'Henceforth I need no helper but this, and without it I shall never stir from my chamber.'

"The Master did not suspect that his new cane was all that was left of poor Chatorra after the witch's second spell had been worked. She had withered the little dwarf away into a stick. She had stilled his kind voice and had closed his gentle brown eyes, but she could not destroy the strength and the loyalty, the devotion and the protec-

tion he had always given his old master. These qualities all still live in the *makila* which serves its Basque owner as loyally to-day as Chatorra served the gouty old Master of the Great House of Lur-Minttoa."

XXVII. THE MAID IN THE HOUSE OF THE FAIRY LAMINAK

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"NAGARRO wants his supper," Mayi says to her grandmother, as she smiles down at the dog whose hungry eyes plainly ask for food.

"Yes, it is long past his time," the old woman replies. "Here is some cornmeal porridge left from our evening meal, and a huge bone from the soup pot of Sunday. Be sure to give him also fresh water to drink. It is best to be very kind to all the animal folk. You will be well repaid in one way or another, although perhaps not always so richly as was Estefanella."

"Is Estefanella a girl in a new tale of the fairies?" Mayi asks hopefully; and Manesh, who has just thrown a log on

the fire, joins her in begging for the story which they are sure is right on the tip of their dear Amatchi's tongue.

"No, the tale is not new," the old woman says. "It is older than I, and I have not had it in mind for a full fifty years, but it will be new for you and it is about fairies. About fairies and two maidens and a dog that could talk as well as you or I can. As often happens in this world, there was once a woman who had two daughters. One day Estefanella, the younger, came to her mother saying:

" 'I am not needed here at home. You and Leontine can easily manage without me. I wish to learn new things, so I think I will go out into service.'

"Her mother gave her consent and the girl went forth from one town to another, asking here and asking there if they did not need a maid. At last early one morning, as she walked on the highroad, she met a certain woman.

" 'Good-day, madame,' Estefanella said, curtseying politely. 'Do you know of a house where perhaps a maid may be needed?'

" 'Indeed, and I do,' was the woman's reply. 'If you will come with me, I myself will take you into my service.'

"So Estefanella went with the woman to a tiny farmhouse on a hill by the roadside.

" 'I must first tell you that we are Laminaks, fairy people,' the mistress explained to Estefanella. 'I go from my home early this morning, but before I depart I will

explain your work to you. Your duties are chiefly here in the kitchen. Dig up the floor! Smash the pitcher! Break all the plates! Spank the children! Give them their breakfast without any help from yourself! Dirty their faces and rumple their hair! Now do your work well and you shall have your reward!' With these strange commands, the fairy Laminak rushed out of the kitchen door.

"Estefanella was dumbfounded. She had never before in her life heard the like of this and she did not know what to think. As she sat with her muddled head in her hands a little dog came and laid his paw on her knee.

" 'Bow-wow. Bow-wow!' he barked. 'I want some breakfast. My stomach is empty.'

" 'Be off, silly little dog,' cried Estefanella. 'I must first feed the children.' But the little dog would not go away. Now Estefanella was fond of all kinds of animals, and so she gave him some porridge and some fresh water in a clean little dish. As soon as the dog had eaten and drunk he came to her and laid his paw again on her knee.

" 'You have been good to me,' he said. 'Now I will repay you. You see, your mistress is truly a fairy and so she says often the opposite of what she really means. What she wants you to do is to sweep up the kitchen, to fill the pitcher with water, to wash all the dishes, and to take good care of the children. If you do this work well, when she comes home in the evening she will give you your choice

of a sack of charcoal or a bag full of gold; of a beautiful star to shine in your hair, or a donkey's tail that shall hang down from your forehead. Heed my warning, Estefanella! Take care to choose the sack of charcoal and the donkey's tail.'

"Now Estefanella had never before met a fairy. The things the little dog told her surprised her very much, but for some reason she thought it best to follow his advice. When the Laminak mistress returned in the evening she found the kitchen nicely swept, the dishes all washed, the children clean and well fed, with their hair nicely brushed. She was pleased with her maid.

" 'You have done well, Estefanella,' she said, 'and now you may choose your own reward. Which would you like, a sack of charcoal or a bag full of gold?'

" 'If you please, Mistress,' said Estefanella, remembering the warning words of the little dog, 'I will take the sack of charcoal.'

" 'And a star to shine in your hair or a donkey's tail hanging down from your forehead?'

" 'If you please, Mistress Laminak, I will take the donkey's tail.'

"The fairy then gave Estefanella a huge bag full of gold and placed a bright shining star in her black hair. The young girl then went back to her home, where her family greeted her with loud cries of wonder. She was

so beautiful with the shining star in her hair and the bag of gold on her shoulder that her sister Leontine became very jealous, and said at once to her mother:

" 'I wish to go out into service, just like Estefanella.'

" 'No, my child, you had best stay here at home,' the mother replied. She knew that Leontine was selfish and unkind, and she feared that she would not get on so well as Estefanella out in the great world. But her older daughter gave her no peace until at last she consented. Leontine went far, far, far, until she came to the city where there dwelt the same fairy Laminak whom her sister had served.

"All happened as before. Meeting the woman on the highroad, Leontine asked her if she knew of a house where they wanted a maid.

" 'Yes, indeed and I do,' the fairy replied. 'I will take you into my own service.' And as with her sister, the Laminak told her to dig up the kitchen, to break all the dishes, to smash the pitcher, to give the children their food without any help, and to dirty their faces. Leontine was surprised, but as she was not so clever as Estefanella, she shrugged her shoulders and did not bother greatly about it. There was some porridge left from the breakfast when the little dog came to her and laid his paw on her knee.

" 'Bow-wow!' he barked. 'I am hungry; I want something to eat.'

"But she scolded him sharply. 'Go away, foolish dog, you shall not have a bite.'

"The dog followed at her heels this way and that, but she did not relent, and at last she drove the poor creature away with hard blows and kicks. So, of course, the dog told her nothing about the fairy's commands.

"When the Laminak returned to her home she was greatly displeased to find that the floor of the kitchen had been dug up with a shovel, that the pitcher and the dishes had been broken to bits, and that her children were all dirty and rumpled. However, she made no complaint to Leontine, but, calling the girl, she said to her:

" 'Your day's work is over and you may go home. Now you shall choose your reward. Which will you have? A sack of charcoal or a bag full of gold? A star in your hair or a donkey's tail hanging down from your forehead?'

"Of course, not having been warned that the fairies often mean just the opposite of what they say, Leontine cried: 'I will choose the bag of gold and the star in my hair.' But to her horror the fairy threw into her arms a bag of charcoal, fastened a donkey's tail to her forehead, and drove her from the house with blows and kicks as hard as those the cruel girl had given the poor little dog."

XXVIII. THE AGE OF THE SORCERER

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"How old are you, Amatchi?" Manesh asks his grandmother.

Supper is over and the family is gathered about the great fire on the hearth of their comfortable kitchen. In the light of the electric bulbs overhead their grandmother seems to these two Basque children the very oldest person in the whole world. Her kind face is covered with fine wrinkles, and the hair that shows out from beneath her black head-kerchief is as white as the fleecy clouds in a blue summer sky. Her deep-set old eyes twinkle merrily as she replies to the question Manesh has put to her.

"That I will leave you to find out if you can," she says, teasing him. "But I wager that you will not be so lucky

as Dominiché, the man who once had to guess the age of the Sorcerer. Listen and I will tell you of a sly trick he used and of how he succeeded; then perhaps you too can think of some way to make me tell you how old I am."

"Once upon a time there was a man named Dominiché who lived with his wife in a tiny hut on a hillside. They were so poor that Dominiché had to beg for his bread at the crossroads near by. From morning till night he sat there by the wayside, asking for help from those who passed on their way to the village.

"One day a strange man stopped before him and said, 'Ah, my poor man, why do you look so unhappy?'

" 'Because, kind sir,' the beggar replied, 'I have no food for myself and my wife, and no money to buy it with. Have pity and help me, I beg you.'

" 'Alas, your plight is truly sad,' the stranger said kindly, 'and I think I can aid you. I will make a bargain with you. I will give you as much money as you can spend. But a year from this day you must tell me my age or I shall carry you off with me as my servant.'

"The beggar was frightened, for he guessed that this stranger was truly a sorcerer who wished to make him his slave to help him in working his magic. 'But a year has twelve months,' the beggar thought to himself, 'and surely in that time I shall be able to find out how old he is.' So he agreed to the bargain made by the stranger.

"He went home with his pockets jingling with gold pieces, singing aloud in his delight at the thought that now he and his wife should have all the things that they needed. Weeks and months passed and they lived happily on their hillside, well clothed and well fed. They bought more and more land, they made their hut larger, and they soon had oxen and cows, sheep, goats, and fowls quite as fine as those of their neighbors about.

"But as time went on there came nearer and nearer the day when Dominiché should go to the crossroads to meet the Sorcerer and carry out his side of the bargain. He became thoughtful and silent. He said no word to his wife from morn until night, until at last she grew worried.

" 'Why do you act so, Dominiché?' she cried. 'What can be the matter? We want for nothing. What reason have you to be so sorrowful?'

" 'Ah, my dear wife,' he said to her sadly, 'I have not yet told you where our good fortune came from. On that day when I first returned home with my pockets overflowing with gold pieces I made a bargain with a sorcerer who gave them to me. I promised to meet him at the crossroads a year from that day and to tell him his age. If I do not do this he will carry me off to be his slave forever. I have thought and I have sought, but I have not been able to find out who he is nor how old he may be.'

" 'If it is nothing but that, it is nothing at all,' cried his

wife, who was far more clever than poor Dominiché. 'I can easily help you to solve the riddle. When the day comes you must take off all of your clothes. You must first jump into a barrel of honey, and afterward into another barrel filled with feathers from our chickens and ducks, our turkeys and geese. The feathers will stick tight to the honey and will form a thick covering for you. Dressed up in them, you must wait for the Sorcerer at the crossroads. As soon as he comes into sight you must get down on all fours and run about wildly. Go between his legs and walk this way and that as though you were a dog.'

"Dominiché wondered at the words of his wife, for he did not quite see how this would answer his riddle. But as no better idea came to him, he did as she told him.

"At the time set the Sorcerer appeared at the crossroads, where to his surprise he saw running wildly about a strange creature covered with feathers of all colors and sizes. It ran this way and that way, it crept between his feet, and it walked all around him like a great dog. The Sorcerer was frightened at the strange beast and, shrinking away from it, he cried:

" 'I have already lived for one hundred and one years, but I have never before seen such a creature as this.'

"At that Dominiché gave a loud cry of joy. He jumped up on his feet and said to the Sorcerer:

" 'This is no beast! It is I, Dominiché, the beggar, come

to fulfill my part of the bargain and to tell you your age. Friend stranger, as you have just said, you have already lived one hundred and one years. Now I go free.'

"With a roar of anger at the way he had been tricked, the Sorcerer disappeared into the forest. He was never seen nor heard from again. With his heart filled with joy, Dominiché went home to take off his coat of honey and feathers.

"Is this an old story?" Manesh asks when his grandmother has ended the tale of Dominiché and the age of the Sorcerer.

"Aye, almost as old as these hills upon which we live," is the reply of the old woman. "It was told me by my grandmother when I was a child no older than you."

"And how many years ago was that, Amatchi?" Manesh asks slyly. He hopes in this way to add up the years his grandmother has lived.

"No, no, my child! You shall not trap me like that. You will have to think up a better trick before I will be caught napping."

"I like that tale of Dominiché," Manesh says, paying no attention to the failure of his little plan. "It must have been fun for him to run about the crossroads on his hands and feet. Let us act it out. We will pretend that Amatchi is the Sorcerer while I shall take the part of old Dominiché. Stand here, Amatchi!"

The old woman laughs as she gets up from her low chair, and the mother and father of the children smile in amusement at the little play going on here in their kitchen. Amatchi often plays the game of "Pretend" with Manesh and Mayi. Perhaps she sees through the trap that Manesh now wishes to lay for her, but if she does so she gives no hint of it in her acting.

Manesh capers about her on hands and knees—pretending to be Dominiché dressed up in his strange coat of honey and feathers.

"Now, it is time for you to give the speech of the Sorcerer," he whispers to his grandmother. Entering into the fun, the old woman says in a hushed, frightened voice:

"Look at that creature running about me! Oh! Oh! I am afraid! I have already lived seventy years—— No, no, I mean one hundred and one——"

But Amatchi is not allowed to finish her sentence, for Manesh jumps up with a cry of delight.

"I caught you! I caught you!" he says, clapping his hands. "I caught you with the very same trick that old Dominiché used. That was a slip of the tongue, but it was the truth. Now I know that your age is seventy years." And he fairly dances at the success of his plan. But down in his heart he is never quite sure whether he really tricked

his dear Amatchi or whether she only took that way of answering the question he had asked her.

The hands of the old grandfather clock point to half after seven. The father of Manesh and Mayi calls out that their bedtime is near. The children each kneel down at his knee to say their evening prayers, for the Basques are pious people who do not forget that it is the good God who protects them from the fairies and spirits, and that He might become angry if His prayers are omitted.

With a last pat on the heads of Nagarro, the dog, and Gatua, the cat, who are asleep by the fireside, Manesh and Mayi say their good-nights and race upstairs to their bedroom above. There is no heat in the upper part of their house, so they lose no time in scurrying out of their clothes and in under the warm bed covers. They are soon fast asleep, dreaming of the fairies and ogres of Amatchi's tales.